

# 2025 ISBE School Nutrition Training

Offer Versus Serve (OVS)

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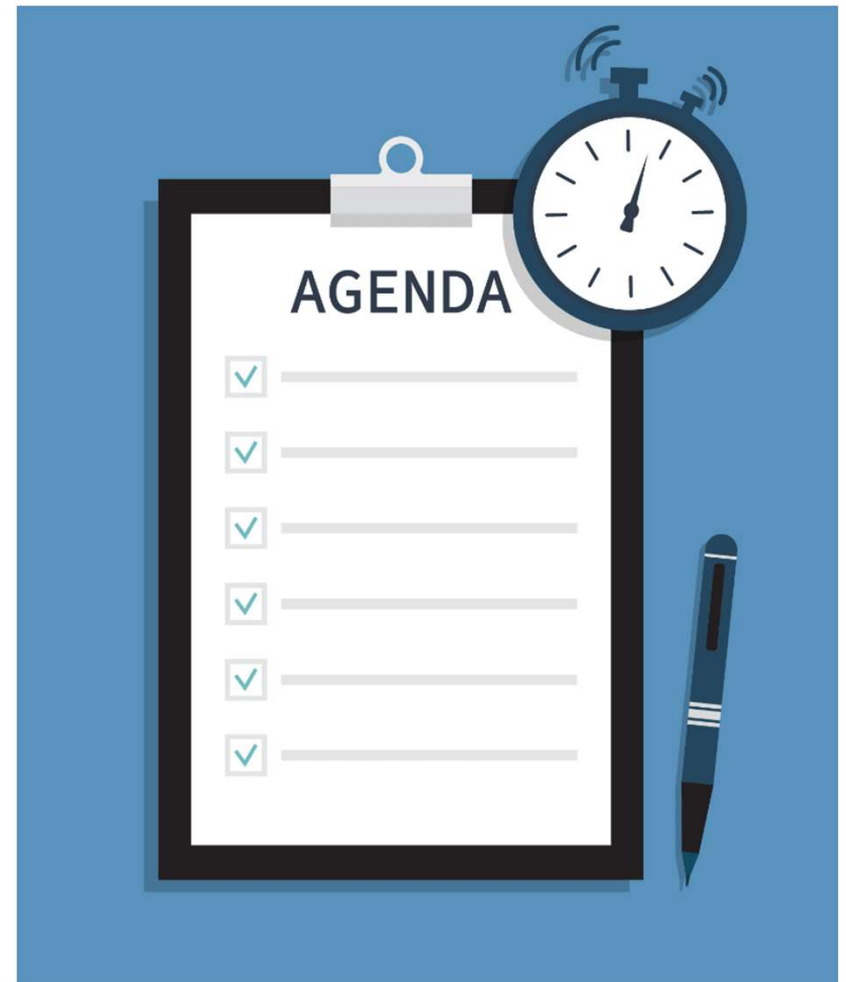


**CHILD NUTRITION  
PROGRAMS**

 **ILLINOIS**  
STATE BOARD OF  
**EDUCATION**

# Agenda

- General Information
- Breakfast OVS
- Lunch OVS
- Meal Identification & Signage
- Staff Training
- Game – Meal or No Meal
- Materials/Resources
- Q/A



# What is Offer versus Serve?

It is a way to plan menus that meet the reimbursable school meal requirements while giving students some control and choice in their meal selection

- Allows students to choose the foods they want
- Reduces food cost and waste

OVS regulations can be found at

- 7 CFR 210.10(e) for the NSLP
- 7 CFR 220.8(e) for the SBP

# Key Terms

- Food Component
  - One of the food groups that is part of a reimbursable meal
- Food Item
  - A specific food offered within the food components

## Example

### Food Components:

Meat/Meat Alternate  
Grain  
Vegetable  
Fruit  
Fluid Milk

### Food Items:

Chicken  
Pasta  
Broccoli  
Apple  
1% Chocolate Milk

## Another Example

Pizza is one food item that contains a grain and a meat/meat alternate component

# Offer versus Serve Breakfast



# OVS Breakfast

- Optional for K-12
- Must offer 4 food items from 3 components
  - **Grain and/or Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA)**
    - Can offer a large grain item and **count it as 1 or 2 items** because each ounce equivalence is 1 food item
      - **Example:**
        - Bagel - 2oz eq (2 food items)
        - Bagel - 1oz eq (1 food item)
    - Combination foods can count as 2 food items (based on CN label/PFS)
      - **Example:**
        - Breakfast Pizza - 1 oz eq Grain/1oz eq M/MA (2 food items)
    - When offering two different 1 oz. eq. Grain or M/MA items at breakfast:
      - May be allowed to take 2 of the same item. This will be counted as 2 items
        - **Example:**
          - 2 slices of toast - each 1 oz eq grain (2 food items)
  - **Fruit/Vegetable/100% Juice**
    - \*\*\* No more than half of the F/V may be in the form of juice over the course of the week
  - **Fluid Milk**

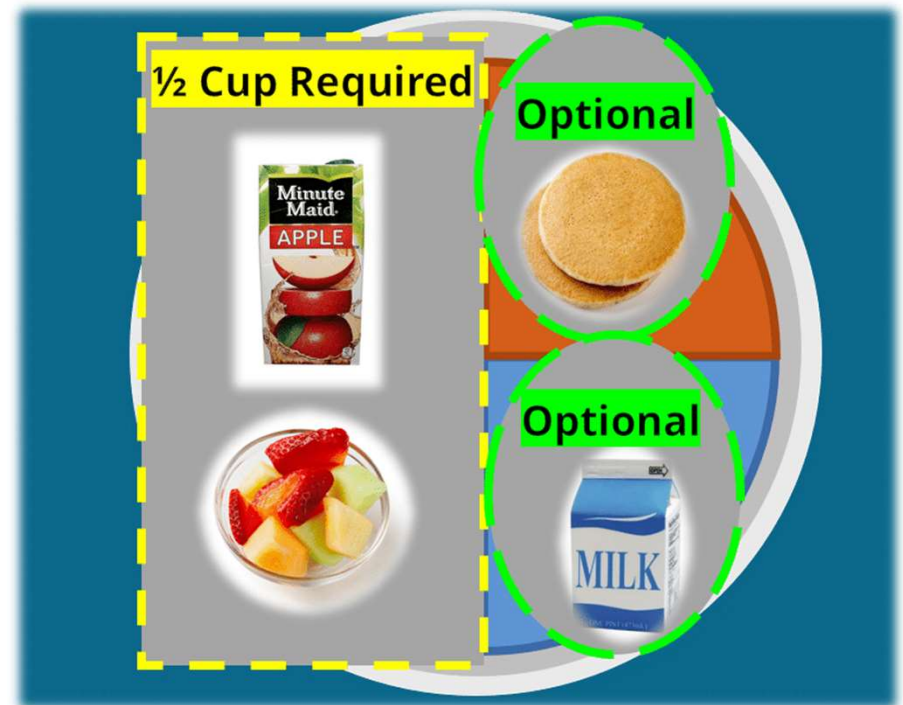
*Sample Breakfast*



# OVS Breakfast

- A reimbursable meal must contain a minimum of 3 out of the 4 food items offered
  - Two items **AND**
  - ½ cup of a fruit and/or vegetable (1 item)

*\*\*The minimum creditable serving size for a fruit or a vegetable is 1/8 cup*



## Meal priced as a unit

- This means that the **meal price is the same regardless** of whether the students take 3, 4, or 5 components.



# Offer versus Serve Lunch





# OVS Lunch

- Optional for grades K-8
- Required for grades 9-12
- Must offer all 5 food components
  - \*\* Components must be planned in full required portions*
  - 1. Meat/Meat Alternate
  - 2. Grain
  - 3. Vegetable
  - 4. Fruit
  - 5. Fluid Milk



# OVS Lunch

- A reimbursable meal must contain a minimum of 3 out of the 5 food components offered
  - Two full components **AND**
  - ½ cup of a fruit and/or vegetable component

*\*\*The minimum creditable serving size for a fruit or a vegetable is 1/8 cup*



## Meal priced as a unit

- This means that the **meal price is the same regardless** of whether the students take 3, 4, or 5 components.

# Pre-Plating and Grab and Go Meals

- Pre-plating, pre-packaging or bundling certain components are allowed, but schools are encouraged to have some **food components/food items with choices**, such as fruit or milk
- Or as the picture indicates, the sandwich and fruit are bundled and then the student would have a choice of milk and vegetable
- Or pre-plate the following:
  - Entrée + Fruit
  - Entrée + Vegetable
  - Entrée + Fruit + Vegetable

*\*\*Student chooses the tray they want*



# Food Bars

- Menu planners must clearly identify the food components/food items provided on the bars and the minimum serving size for each food component/food item
- The menu planner must also indicate which foods and combinations of foods the students may choose to select a reimbursable meal under OVS

## Salad Bar Communication

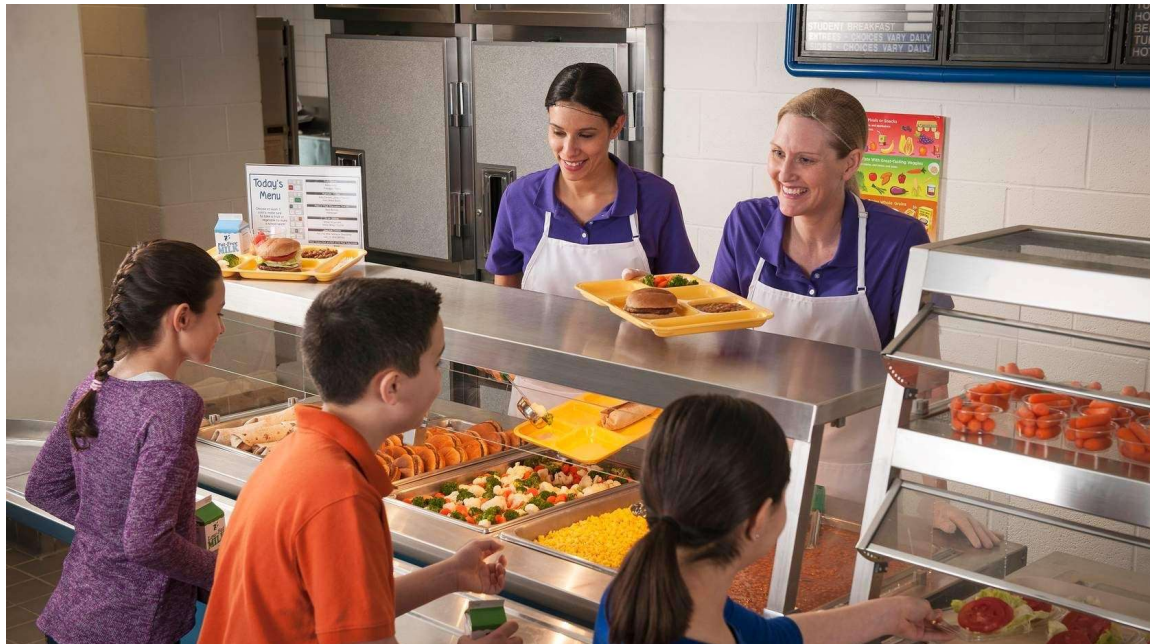
<b>Meat:</b> <i>May take 2 portion cups</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ham (1oz)</li><li>• Turkey (1oz)</li><li>• Cheese (1oz)</li><li>• Chicken (1oz)</li></ul>	<b>Grains:</b> <i>May take 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Croutons (1 pkg)</li><li>• Roll (1oz)</li><li>• Crackers (4 pkgs)</li></ul>	<b>Vegetable:</b> <i>May take 2 cups</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Romaine lettuce</li><li>• Tomatoes</li><li>• Broccoli</li><li>• Garbanzo Beans</li><li>• Peas</li><li>• Cucumbers</li><li>• Green Bell Peppers</li><li>• Pickles</li></ul>	<b>Fruit:</b> <i>May take 1 cup</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fresh Fruit (1 each = 1/2 cup)</li><li>• Canned Fruit (1/2 cup)</li><li>• Juice (1 juice = 1/2 cup)</li></ul>	<b>You MUST take:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ½ cup of a fruit and/or Vegetables</li><li>• 2 other components</li></ul>
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# OVS and “Extra” Foods

- A school may offer “extra” foods, such as ice cream or pudding, which are not creditable
- This “extra” food may be selected by the student in addition to the meal, but may not credit toward the minimum number of food components/food items a school is required to offer under OVS
- NOTE: these “extra” foods must be included in a nutrient analysis of the weekly menu to assess compliance with the dietary specifications (calories, saturated fat, and sodium)



# Meal Identification & Signage



# Meal Identification & Signage

- Students, servers and cashiers must be able to identify what constitutes a reimbursable meal
- Signage must be:
  - **Near or at the beginning of the serving line**
    - List the menu items for the day
    - Identify what they need to select to have a reimbursable meal before they start grabbing their food



Overall, it is important to communicate reimbursable meal parameters to students:

- When a student chooses only 1 or 2 components, like a slice of pizza, the meal is **not reimbursable** and the student will have to pay a la carte pricing



# Menu Signage Examples



# Menu Signage PDF Fillable Templates

## TODAY'S BREAKFAST

= A HEALTHY BREAKFAST!

**FRUITS AND/OR VEGETABLES** REQUIRED

CHOOSE \_\_\_\_\_

**GRAINS AND/OR PROTEIN**

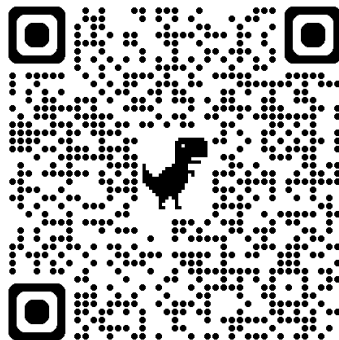
CHOOSE \_\_\_\_\_

**MILK**

CHOOSE \_\_\_\_\_

Learn more about school breakfast [fns.usda.gov/fn/stp/materials](https://fns.usda.gov/fn/stp/materials)

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## Today's Lunch

= a healthy lunch!

**Protein** (Choose ☐)

**Grains** (Choose ☐)

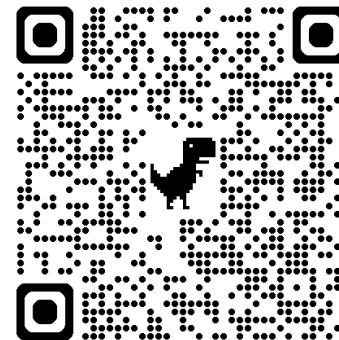
**Vegetables** (Choose ☐)

**Fruits** (Choose ☐)

**Milk** (Choose ☐)

Learn more about school lunch at [fns.usda.gov/fn/stp/materials](https://fns.usda.gov/fn/stp/materials)

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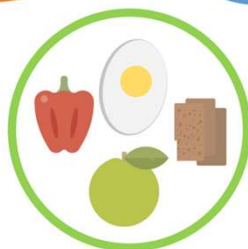
# ISBE OVS Posters

## What Makes a School Breakfast



### Offer Vs. Serve

Choose **at least 3 items** from the four offered, **One must be** a 1/2 cup of **fruit** (or **vegetable**).



The fourth item offered may be another grain, another fruit or veggie, or a meat or meat alternate.

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

## The 5 Components of a School Lunch



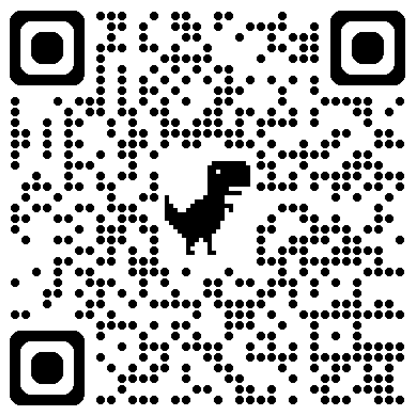
### Offer Vs. Serve

Choose **1/2 cup fruit**, or **1/2 cup vegetable**, or 1/2 cup **combination**, and **at least 2 other components**.



**Choose all 5 for the best nutrition!**

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*





# USDA OVS Posters

## Offer versus Serve Posters for Breakfast and Lunch

These posters can be used as signage to educate students in selecting a reimbursable meal under Offer versus Serve (OVS). Teachers and school foodservice professionals will find these posters help students more quickly select the foods in the breakfast and lunch line that make up a reimbursable meal.

### Availability

All are welcome to download these materials and make copies. To download the files, please right-click on the link and select "save link as."



[OVS Elementary School Breakfast Poster](#)



[OVS Middle/High School Breakfast Poster](#)



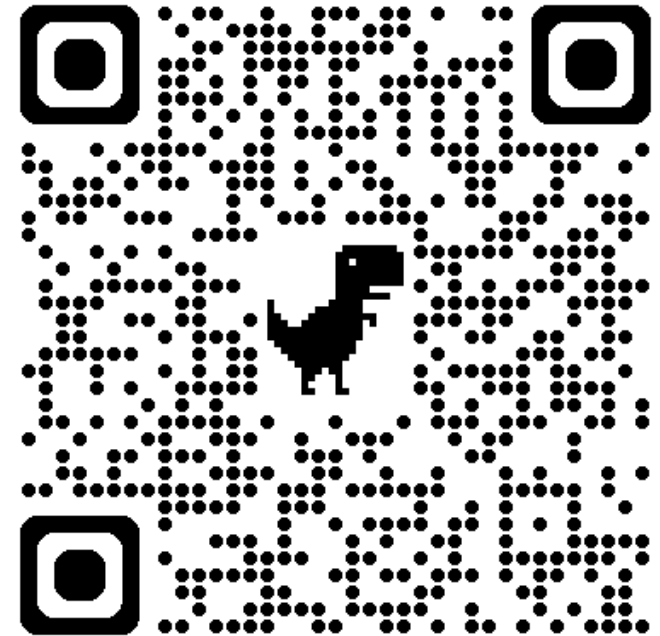
[OVS High School Lunch Poster](#)



[OVS Elementary School Lunch Poster](#)



[OVS Middle School Lunch Poster](#)



USDA OVS Materials Website

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/nsfp/offer-versus-serve-posters>

# Staff Training on OVS



# Staff Training on OVS

- Point of service and serving line staff must be trained on what makes a reimbursable meal, so they can easily identify the meal components as the students go by with their trays

## Key Questions for Cashiers are:

- Does the student have at least 3 components or food items on their tray?
- Is one component/item at least ½ cup of a fruit and/or vegetable?
- Are the other 2 components/items in full serving sizes?

If you can answer “yes” to each question, the meal is reimbursable

# Training Materials

USDA  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service

## OFFER VERSUS SERVE (OVS) Tip Sheet for School Food Service Managers

### School Breakfast Program

#### What is OVS?


The goal of OVS is to reduce food waste while allowing students to choose the foods they want to eat. Everyone plays a role. When students and cafeteria staff understand OVS, breakfast lines move smoothly, allowing students to make the most of meal time and enjoy the wholesome and appealing foods they are served. It also helps reduce overall food costs.

Under OVS at breakfast, schools must offer at least four food items from the three required food components (fruit, grains, and fluid milk\*).


- A **food component** is one of three required food groups in a reimbursable breakfast. These are fruits, grains, and fluid milk\*.
- A **food item** is a specific food offered within the three food components, for example, 2 slices of whole grain-rich bread, 1 cup of grapes, and 1 cup of milk. This meal meets OVS breakfast requirements because three food components and four food items are offered.

Students must select at least three of the four offered food items under OVS at breakfast, including at least ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable. Please note, OVS is optional at breakfast for all grade levels.


#### Required Components at Breakfast



**Fruit**  
1 cup



**Grains**  
1 ounce equivalent  
(oz eq)



**Fluid Milk\***  
1 cup

**Sample OVS breakfast menu:**

Variety of milk\*: fat free or low-fat (1 cup milk)  
 Slice of whole grain-rich toast (1 oz eq grain)  
 Whole grain-rich cereal (1 oz eq grain)  
 Orange slices (1 cup fruit)

#### Optional Components at Breakfast

**Vegetables**

- Vegetables may be offered as a substitute for fruits.

**Meats/Meat Alternates**

- A meat/meat alternate may be served to meet the weekly grain requirement, as long as a 1 oz eq minimum of grains is offered daily.
- A meat/meat alternate may also be offered as an "extra" food (not credited toward meal pattern requirements) if a reimbursable meal is selected.

\*Water does not count as one of the three required food components and cannot be served as a substitute for milk.



USDA  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service

## OFFER VERSUS SERVE (OVS) Tip Sheet for School Food Service Managers

### National School Lunch Program

#### What is OVS?

The goal of OVS is to reduce food waste and allow students to choose the foods they want to eat. Everyone plays a role. When students and cafeteria staff understand OVS, lunch lines move smoothly, allowing students to make the most of the lunch break and enjoy the wholesome and appealing foods they are served. It also helps reduce overall food costs.

Schools must offer all five food components in at least the minimum required quantities:

- A **food component** is one of five required food groups in reimbursable lunches. These are meats/meat alternates, grains, fruits, vegetables, and fluid milk\*.
- A **food item** is a specific food offered within the five food components. For example, spaghetti (whole grain-rich pasta with tomato sauce) is one food item that contains a grain and a vegetable component.

Under OVS, students must select *three meal components* to ensure they get the nutritional benefits of a meal. OVS is required for lunches served in high schools, but is optional in middle and elementary schools. OVS is not required for meals offered as part of field trips or for any other meals served away from the school campus.

The required five food components must be offered for school lunch. Students must select at least three of the five required food components, including at least ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable, to have a reimbursable lunch. See the **Required Food Components** table for a listing of required food components and their minimum quantities that must be offered. Meats/meat alternates and grains are measured in ounce equivalents (oz eq) is considered the amount of food product that is equal to 1 ounce).

#### Required Food Components

Required Food Component	Daily Minimum Requirements for Each Grade Level			
	K-5	6-8	K-8	9-12
Vegetables	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup	1 cup
Fruits	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup
Grains	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq
Meats/Meat Alternates	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq
Fluid Milk*	1 cup	1 cup	1 cup	1 cup

#### Is it Reimbursable?

Use this simple checklist to determine if student lunches are reimbursable under OVS:

- ☒ Does the meal offered to students include the minimum required amounts of vegetables, fruits, grains, meats/meat alternates, and fluid milk?
- ☒ Does the meal selected by the student contain at least three components, including at least ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable?

If the answer to each of these questions is yes, then the school lunch is reimbursable under OVS.  
\*Water does not count as one of the three required food components and cannot be served as a substitute for milk.





# Training Materials



<https://youtu.be/kn0xImQsaG8>





- Set a basket of fruit and/or vegetables near check-out in case a student is falling short of a reimbursable meal
- Include information on menus, school websites, and newsletters to educate students and their families about OVS
- Use graphics or pictures to make the signage easily understandable for students
- Work with teachers to review the day's menu with students and explain how they can choose a reimbursable meal
- Share the training video to the students

# Breakfast

**M** EAL **%** NO **M** EAL



# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



3 items were taken BUT  
missing  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup F/V



# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?

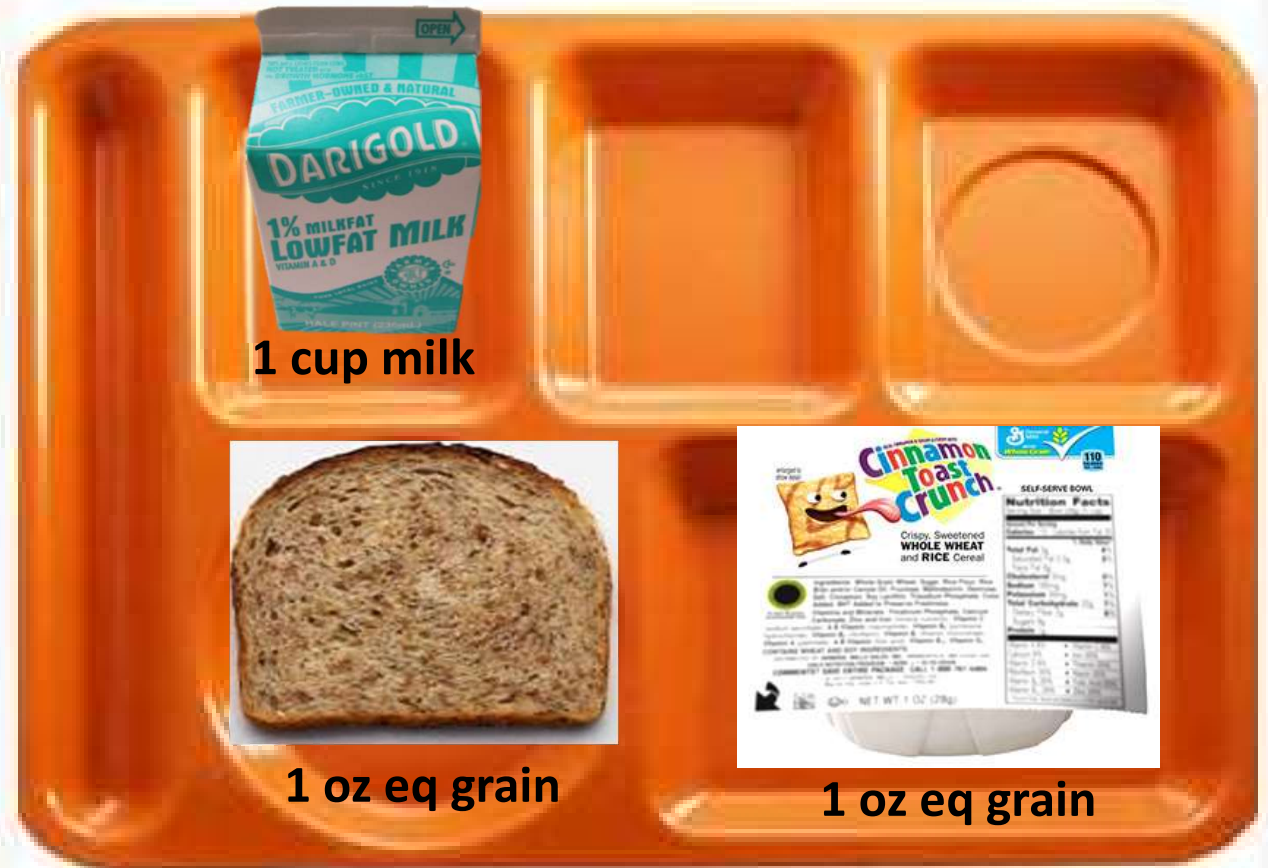




# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



3 items were taken BUT  
missing ½ cup F/V





# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



**1/2 cup juice**

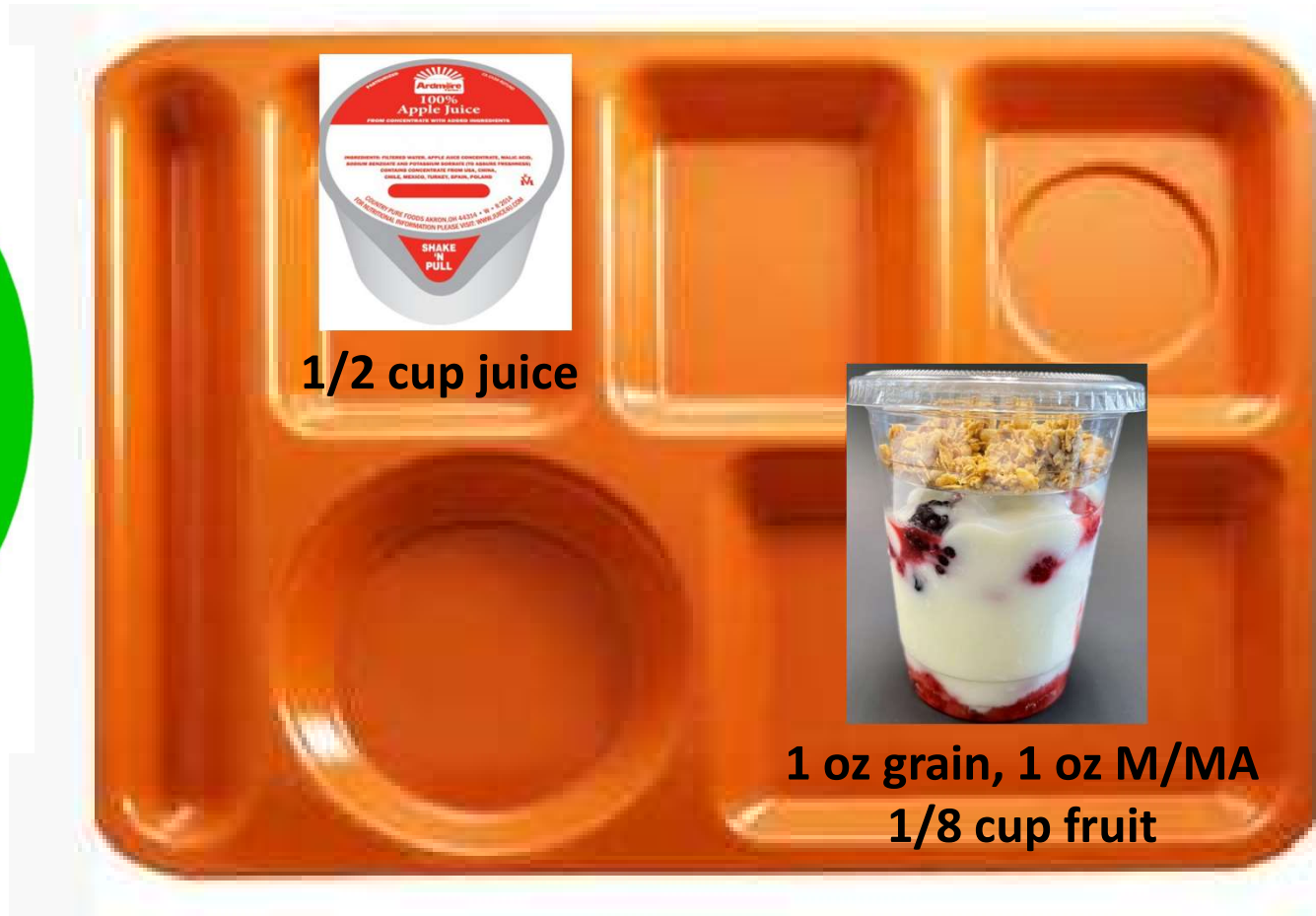


**1 oz grain, 1 oz M/MA  
1/8 cup fruit**

# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?

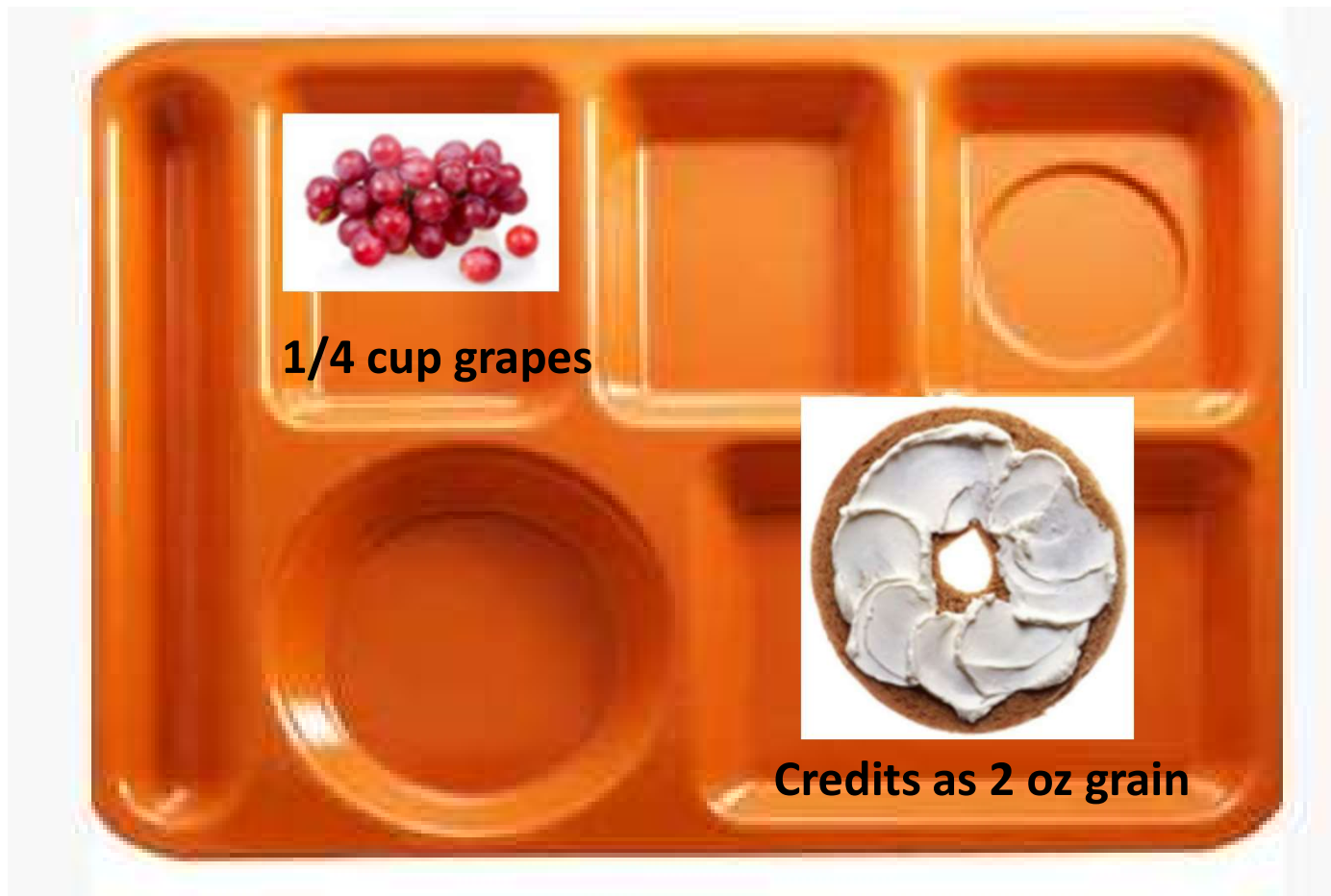


3 items were taken  
(including a ½ cup F/V)



# Breakfast

## Meal or No Meal?



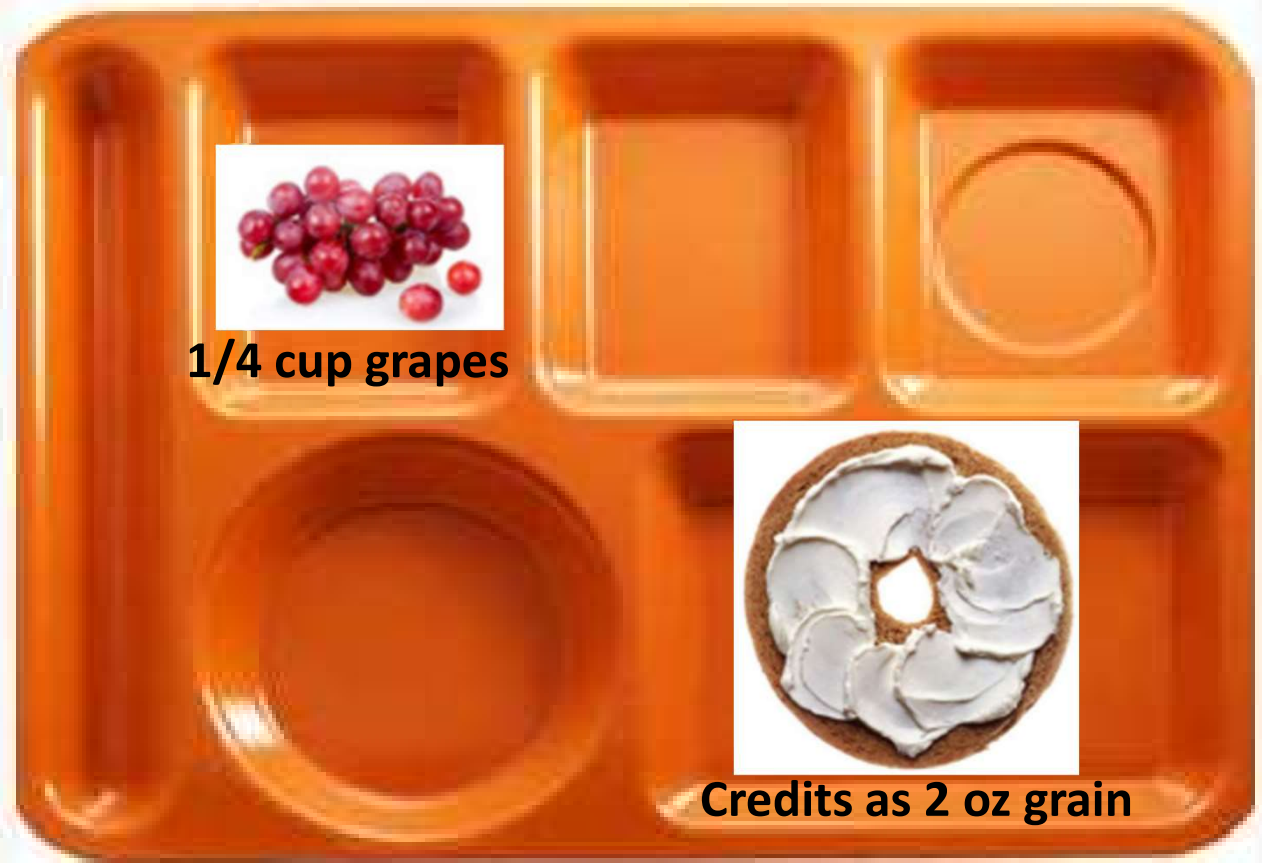
1/4 cup grapes

Credits as 2 oz grain

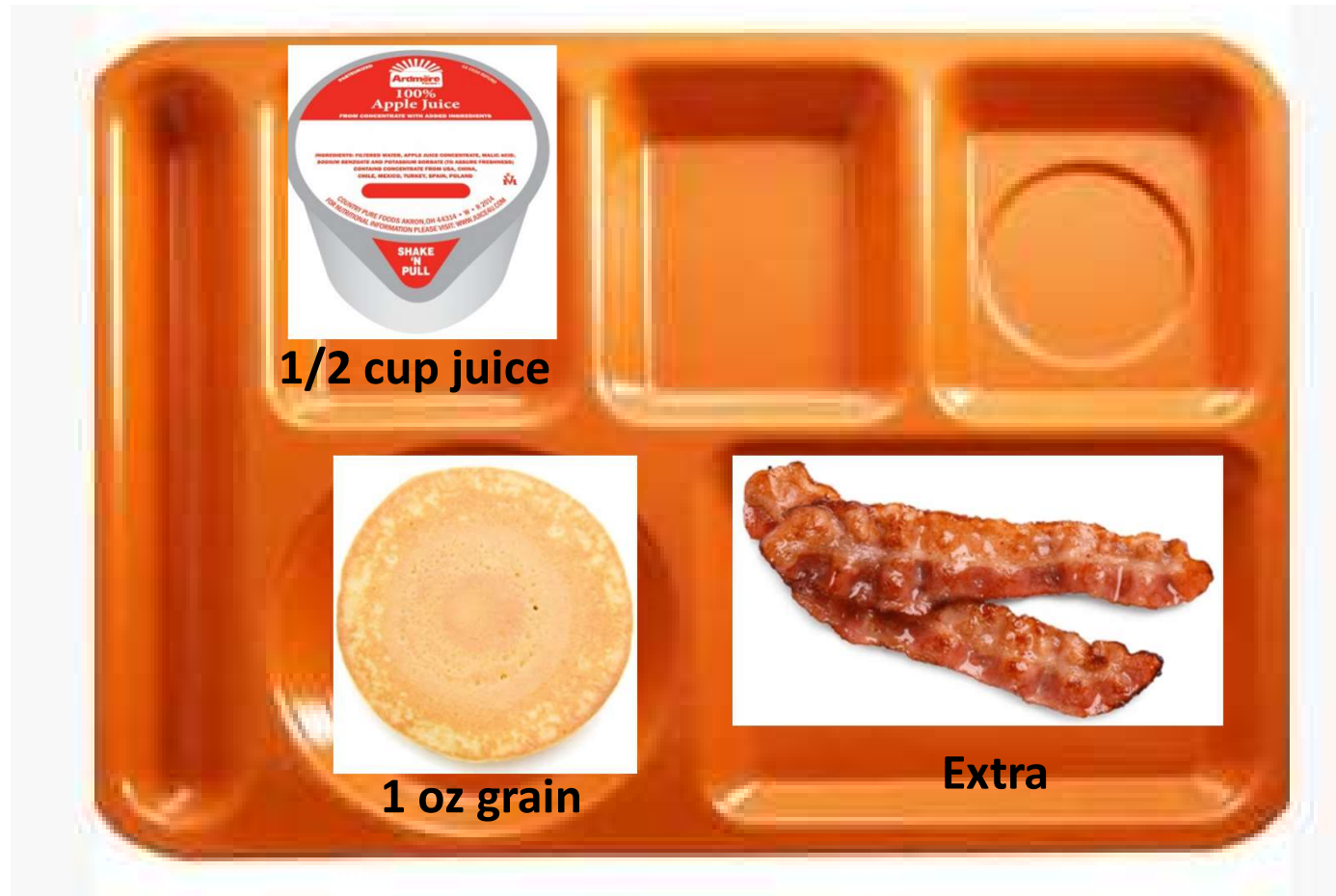
# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



3 items were taken BUT  
not a full  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup F/V



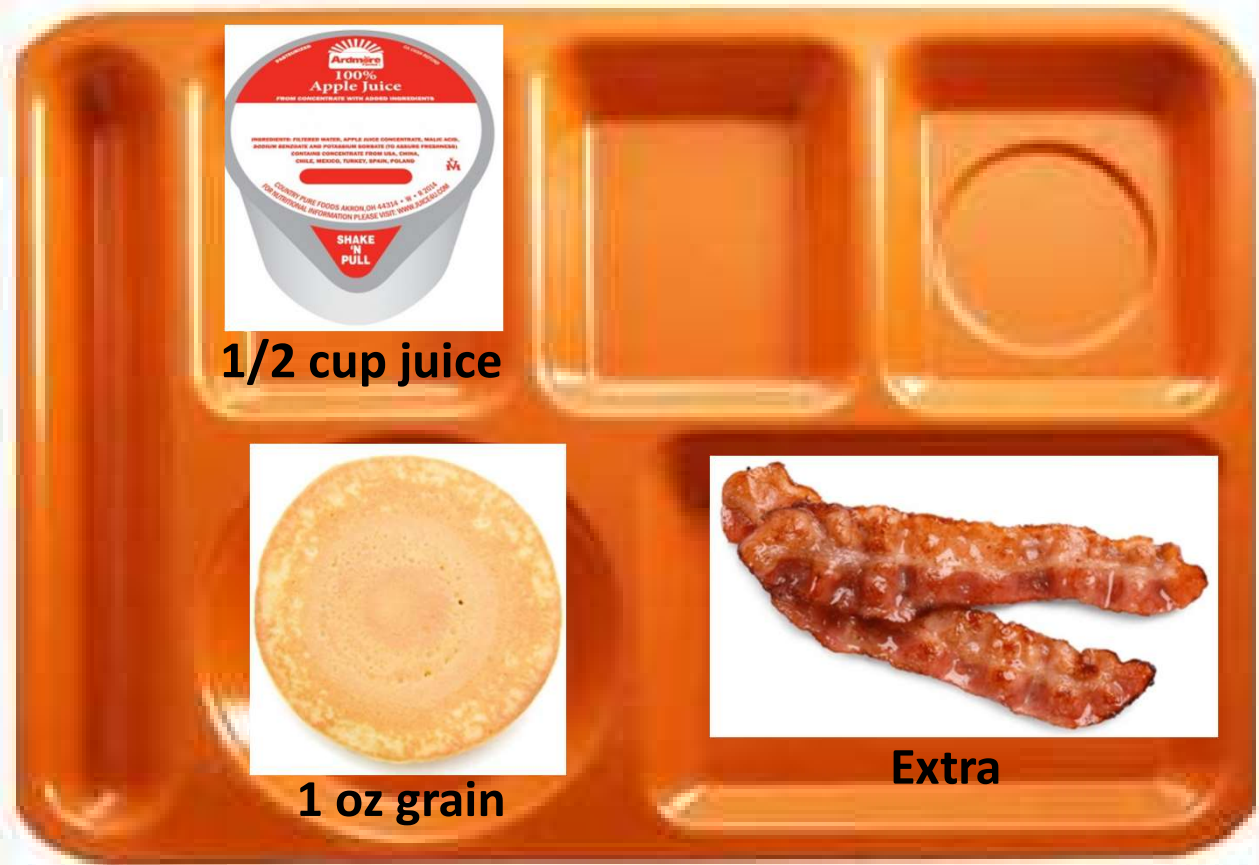
# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



Only 2 items were taken  
Bacon is an “Extra” food item





# Breakfast

## Meal or No Meal?



1/2 cup fruit



1 oz M/MA



1 oz M/MA



# Breakfast Meal or No Meal?



Three (3) items were selected AND 1/2 cup F/V.

NOTE: The April 2024 final rule allows 2 meat/meat alternate servings and no grain.

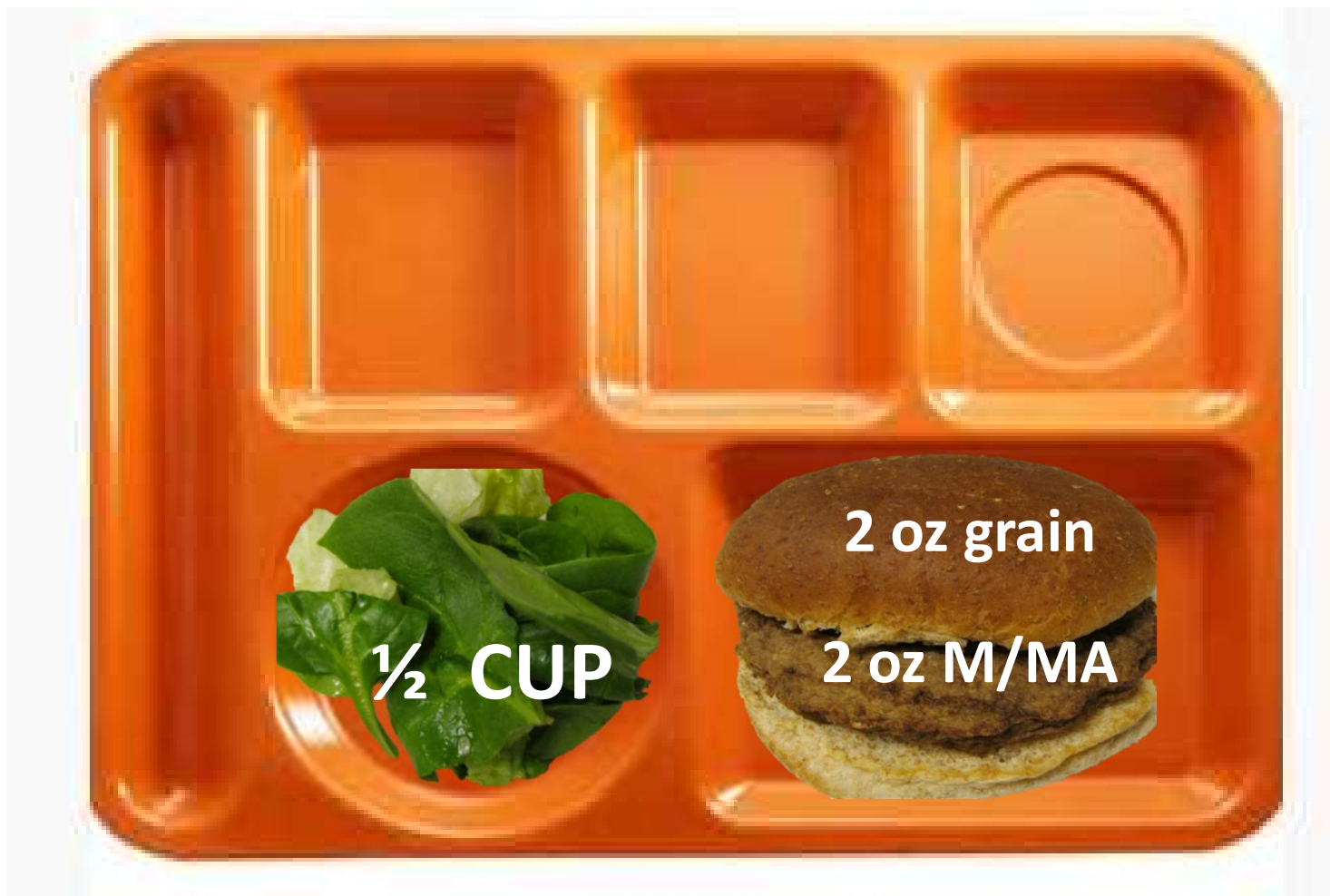


# Lunch



# Lunch → K-8

## Meal or No Meal?



# Lunch → K-8

## Meal or No Meal?



3 items were taken BUT not a full  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup F/V  
Remember: leafy greens yield half the volume. If the server places  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup on the tray, credits as only  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup

# Lunch → K-8

## Meal or No Meal?

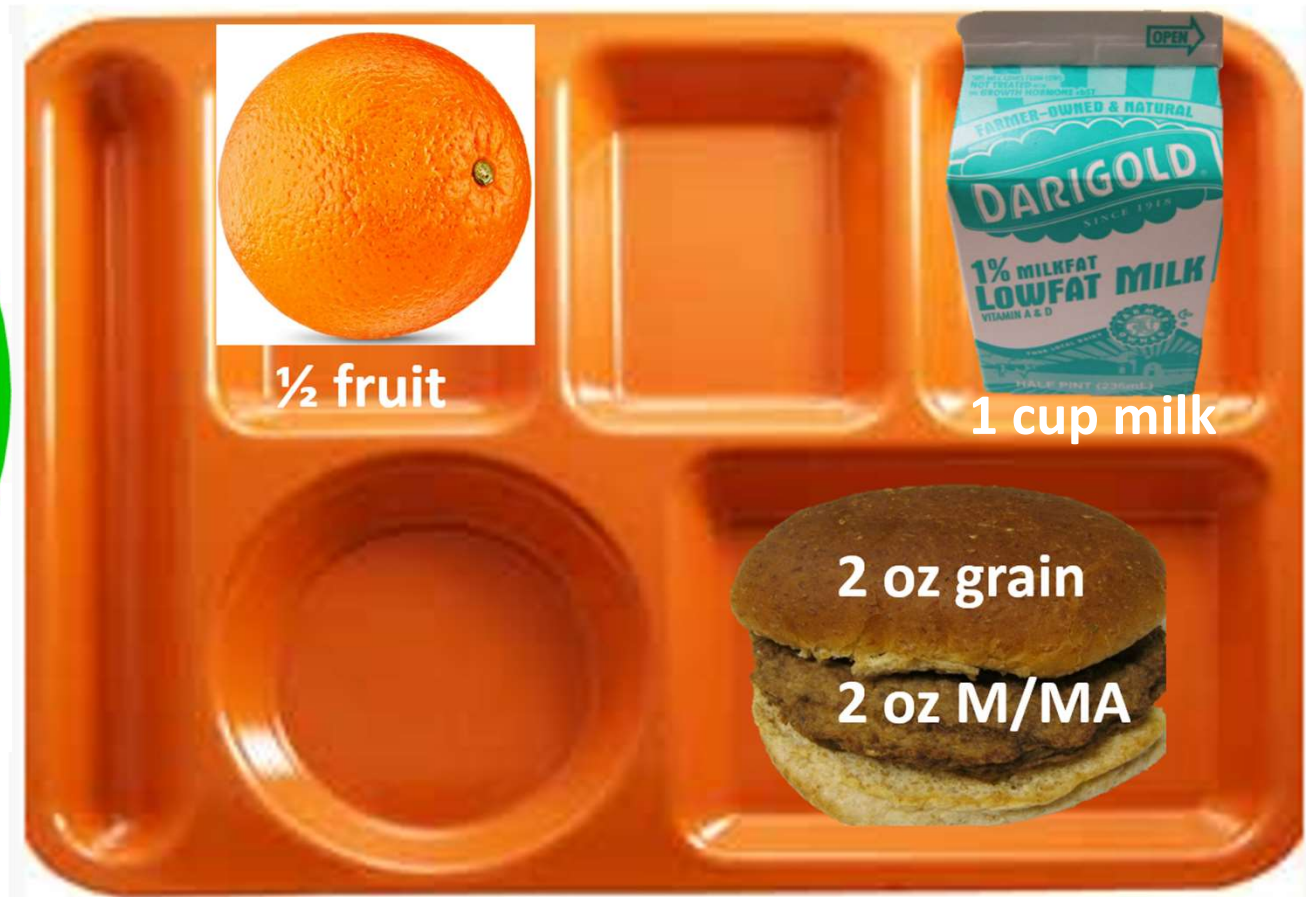




# Lunch → K-8 Meal or No Meal?

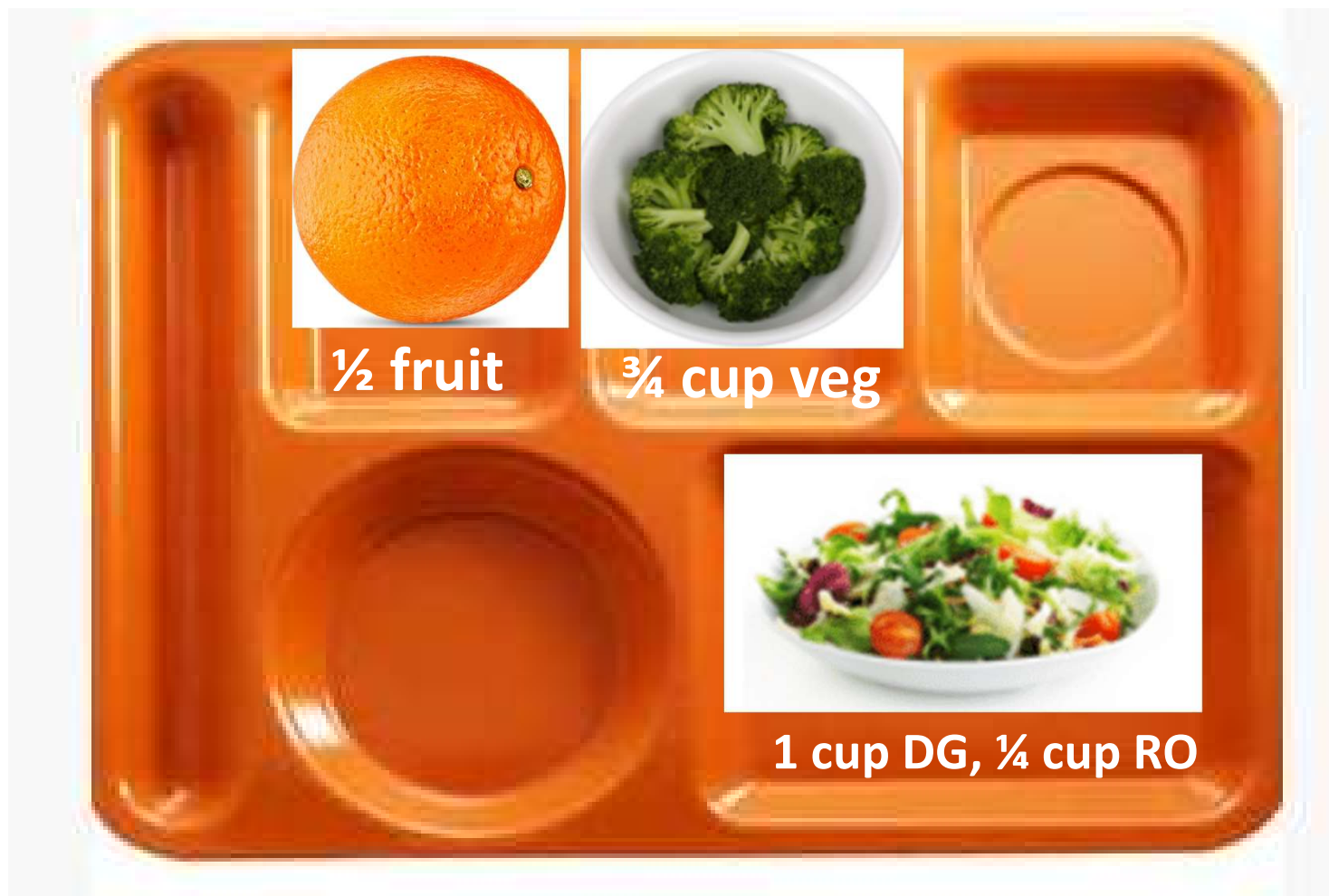


4 components were  
selected including a ½ cup F/V



# Lunch → K-8

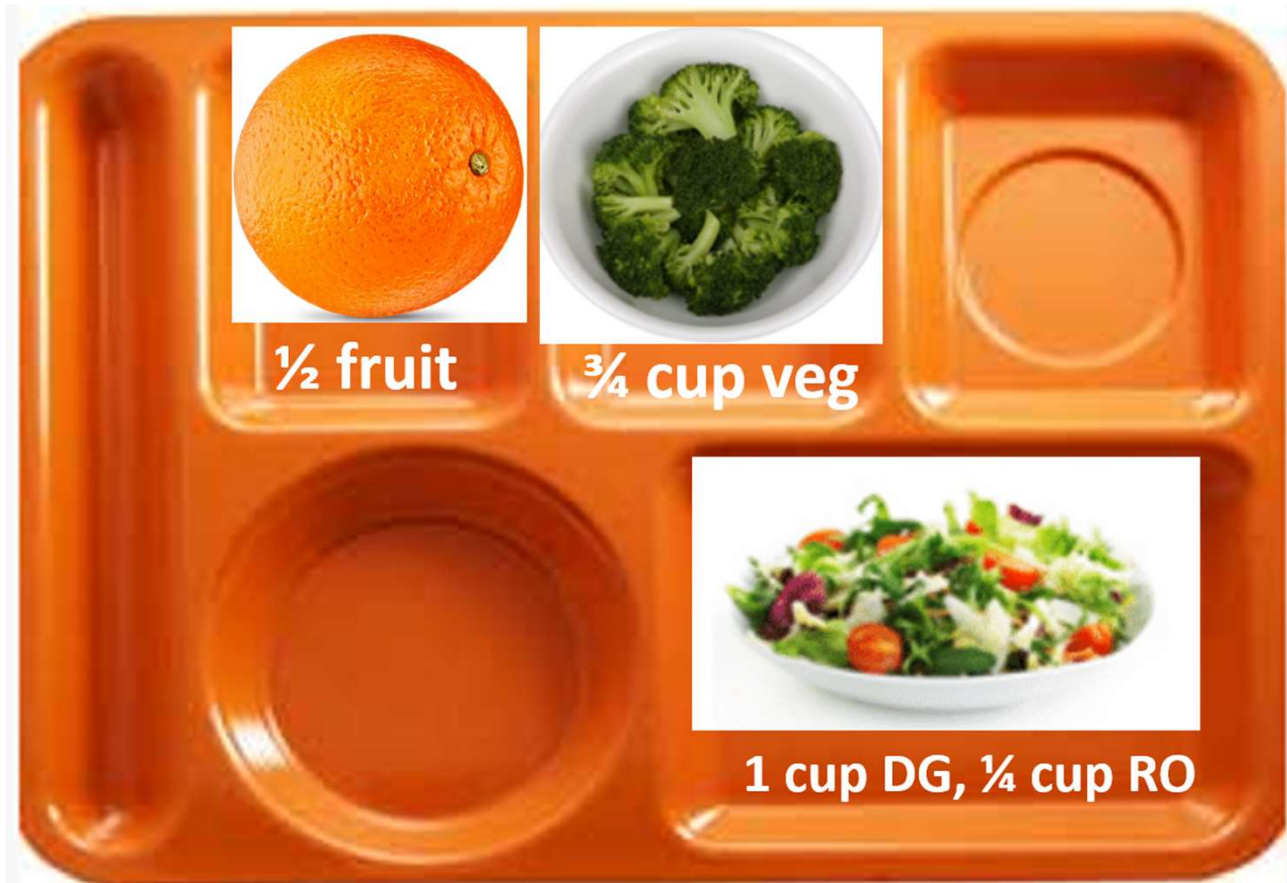
## Meal or No Meal?



# Lunch → K-8 Meal or No Meal?



Only 2 meal components were  
selected (fruit and vegetable)



# Lunch → K-8

## Meal or No Meal?





# Lunch → K-8 Meal or No Meal?



4 food components were selected BUT  
not a full ½ cup of fruit F/V





# Lunch → 9-12

## Meal or No Meal?



# Lunch → 9-12 Meal or No Meal?



The student took all 5 components.  
NOTE: how the entrée is a combination  
food and contains more than 1  
component



# Lunch → 9-12

## Meal or No Meal?



# Lunch → 9-12

## Meal or No Meal?



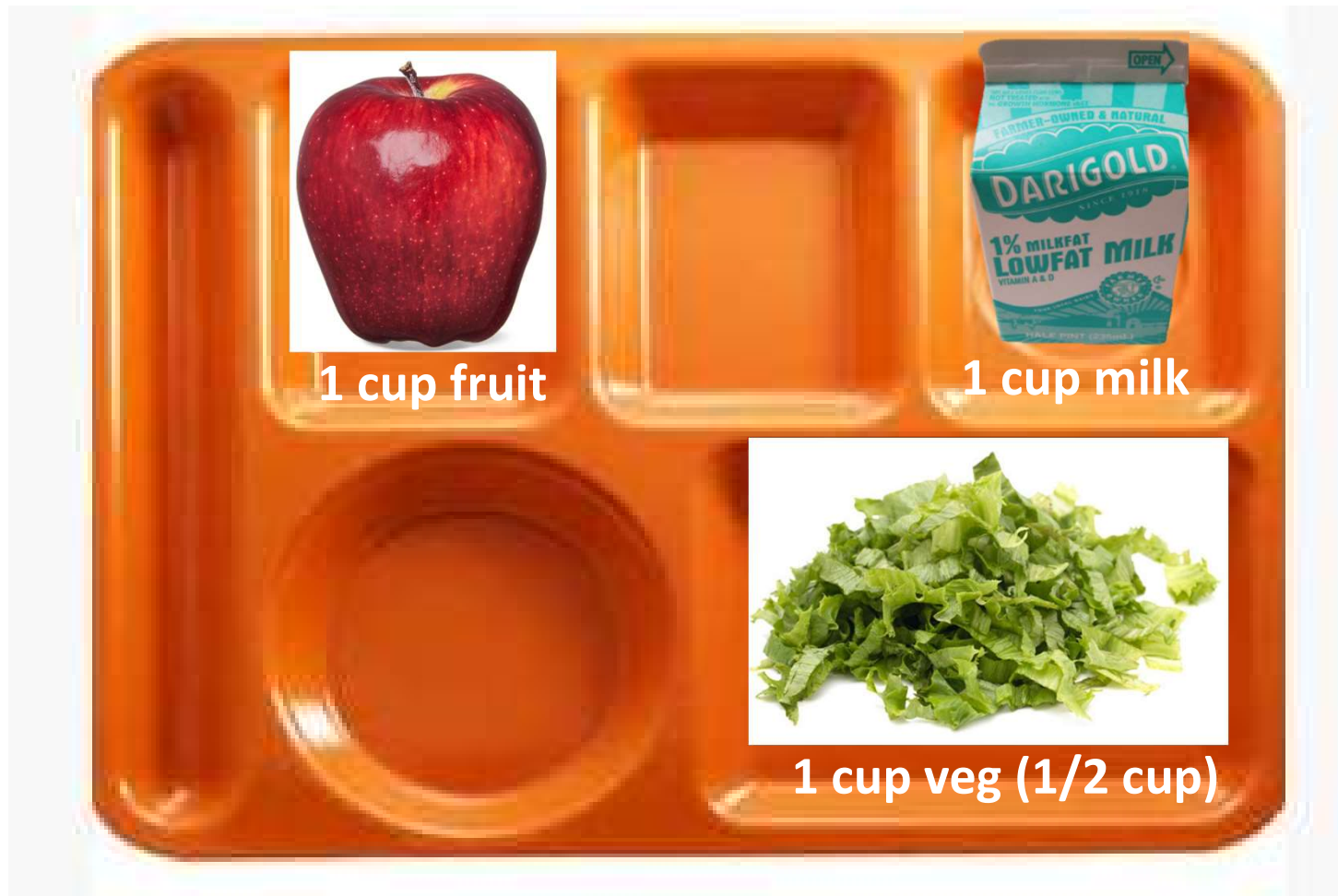
4 food components were selected BUT  
not a full ½ cup of fruit F/V





# Lunch → 9-12

## Meal or No Meal?



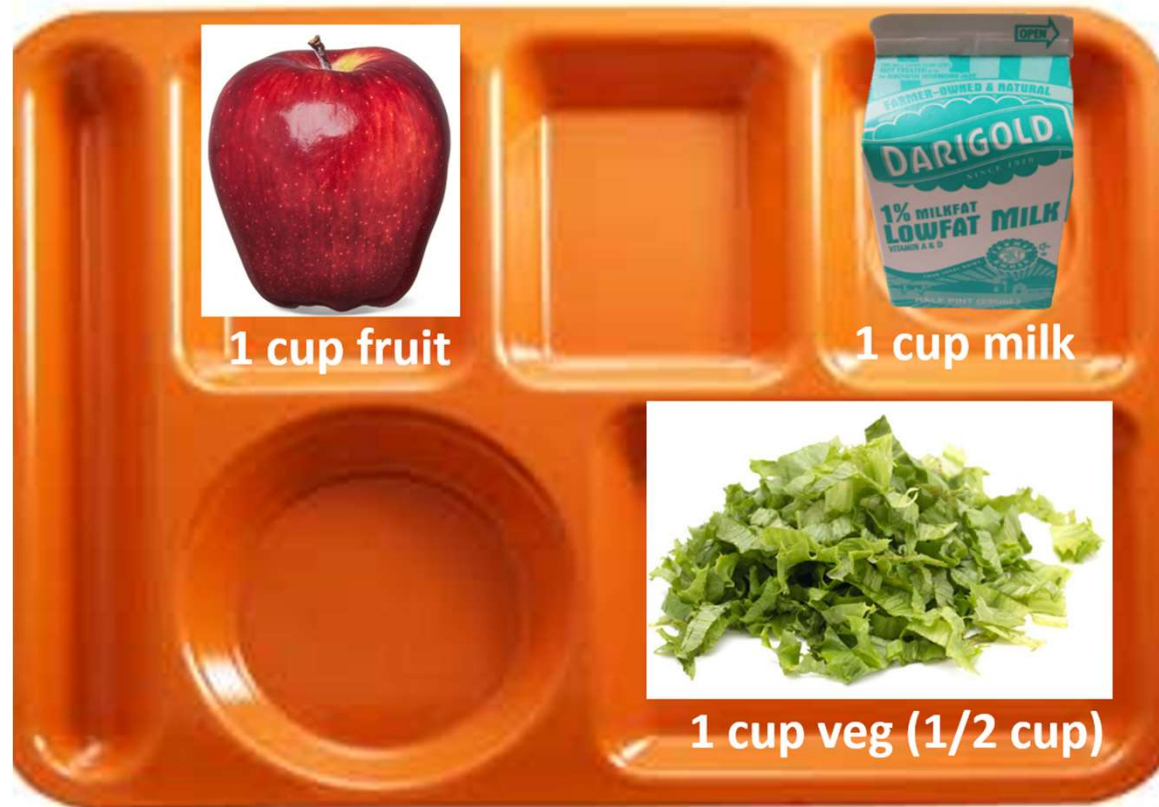


# Lunch → 9-12

## Meal or No Meal?



2 full components were selected  
including a ½ cup of fruit F/V



# Lunch → 9-12

## Meal or No Meal?



½ cup veg



2 oz grain, 2 oz M/MA

# Lunch → 9-12 Meal or No Meal?



3 components were  
selected including a ½ cup F/V



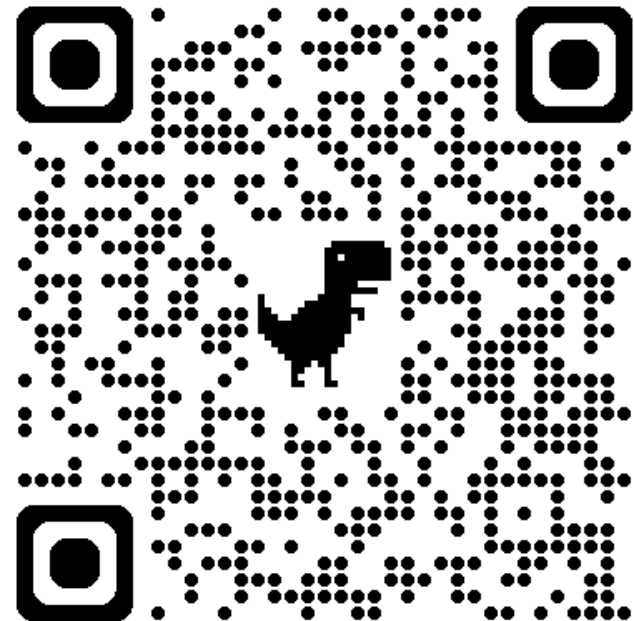
# Resources – USDA OVS Manual

EFFECTIVE BEGINNING SCHOOL YEAR 2015-2016

## OFFER VERSUS SERVE GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM AND THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE U.S.  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.





# Let's Review!





## **Breakfast OVS Review**

### **You must offer:**

#### **4 items from 3 food components**

---

- Fruit/Vegetables, Grains/Meat, and Milk are required
- Meat/Meat Alternate is now a combined component with Grains
- A food item may be counted as 1 or 2, depending on size and if it is a combination food

### **Students must take:**

#### **At least 3 items**

---

- 1 food item =  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fruit/veg/combo
- 2 other items = students' choice
- Milk is not required to be taken

# OVS Lunch – Summary/Comparison Chart

OVS is optional for grades K-8 in lunch and breakfast.

OVS is required for high school grades 9-12 at lunch and optional at breakfast.

Five full components must be offered:

- Meat/Meat Alternative minimum 1 oz.
- Grain minimum 1 oz.
- Vegetable 3/4 cup
- Fruit 1/2 cup
- Fluid Milk 1 cup

Five full components must be offered:

- Meat/Meat Alternative minimum 2 oz.
- Grain minimum 1 oz.
- Vegetable 1 cup
- Fruit 1 cup
- Fluid Milk 1 cup

A reimbursable meal must contain three of five components

- A fruit or vegetable component (or combination of the two) with at least 1/2 cup portion and
- Two other full components

Decline options:

- Students are allowed to decline any two of five food components but must select at least 1/2 cup of either a fruit or vegetable or smaller portions combined equaling 1/2 cup.

Minimum amount of fruit and vegetable:

- The minimum creditable serving size for a fruit or a vegetable is 1/8 cup.
  - Dried fruit doubles in credit (1/4 cup is 1/2 cup of fruit).
  - Fresh, raw salad greens are halved (1 cup of romaine is 1/2 cup of vegetable).



# Questions?

# Nutrition Department

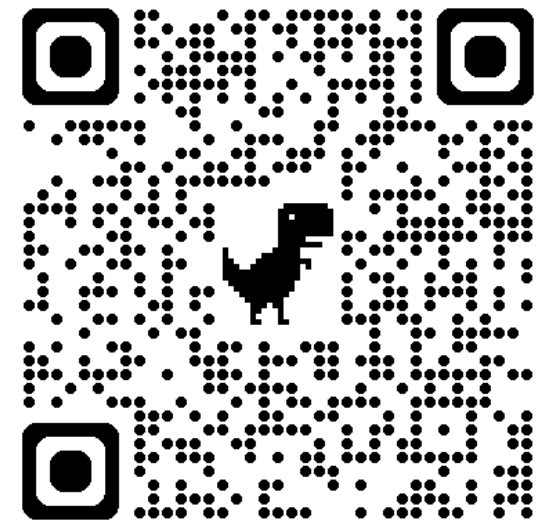
## Illinois State Board of Education

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Jonathan Bahnsen ([jbahnsen@isbe.net](mailto:jbahnsen@isbe.net))



## Question:

To implement OVS for junior high-grade levels at breakfast is...

- A. Optional
- B. Required

## Answer → Optional

Not only is it optional to implement OVS at grade levels below the senior high level, but it is optional at breakfast for all grades.

OVS is only required for grades 9-12 for lunch.





**Is OVS required for K-8?**

# Is OVS required for K-8?



- OVS for K-8 is Optional
- YOU decide whether to implement OVS for grades K-8
- You can operate a hybrid OVS
  - Example
    - K-1 → serve
    - 2-8 → OVS