



Understanding a Reimbursable Meal

2024-25 NORTHWOOD-KENSETT COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

A SUCCESSFUL NUTRITION PROGRAM MEANS BEING ABLE TO OFFER ACCEPTABLE, HEALTHY, AND TASTEFUL MEAL OPTIONS TO ALL STUDENTS, STAFF, AND VISITORS AT AN EXCEPTIONALLY LOW COST.

Every school meal and snack prepared, served, and sold to students must meet the USDA Food and Nutrition Service nutrition standards established by the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, and also align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for specific age groups.

Meals that meet these nutrition standards are identified as **REIMBURSABLE MEALS**. Participation in school breakfast and lunch is key to ensure students receive the necessary nutrition and energy to sustain them throughout the school day. Northwood-Kensett Nutritional Services strives to maintain and grow student participation and satisfaction by offering appealing and healthy food options, a variety of choices, and a pleasant serving and dining environment — resulting in an overall positive experience for everyone.

OFFER vs SERVE (OVS) Meal Serving Style

Both the N-K Elementary School and the Ms./Sr. High School use the Offer vs Serve meal style for breakfast and lunch. OVS allows students to decline certain items they do not plan to eat, or do not like, thus helping to reduce waste in amount of food prepared and food thrown away.

From the healthy options offered, and **with guidance from Nutritional Services staff**, students are allowed to choose their preferred foods for their daily breakfast and lunch. Students are likely to be more satisfied with being able to choose from several food items they will eat, instead of being given something they will not eat. They are given flexibility of food options or food combinations to create their reimbursable meal — **which still must meet certain nutrition standards to qualify for the school meal pricing.**

Selecting a Reimbursable Meal

FIRST, a meal pattern must be followed for a reimbursable meal.

- The meal pattern describes what food **components** (food groups) and amounts of each component per day and per week that is required for a certain age/grade group
- A food **component** is one of five food groups that create a reimbursable meal. These are: fruits, vegetables, meats (meat alternatives), grains, and fluid milk.
- Breakfast and lunch served at both schools require different food components, and follow different meal patterns and guidelines as designated by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service nutrition standards

OVS LUNCH = REIMBURSABLE MEAL

- All 5 components (food groups) must be OFFERED in the required minimum daily amounts
- A student MAY choose up to all 5 food components in the required minimum daily amounts
- Students **MUST** take 3 of the 5 components (2 may be declined)
 - One of the three components TAKEN must be AT LEAST ½ cup fruit or vegetable
- The other two components selected must be in the required minimum daily amounts



The OVS lunch meal pattern requires minimum daily amounts of each component to be offered for specific grade levels.

COMPONENT	GRADE K-8	GRADE 9-12
Fruit	1/2 cup	1 cup
Vegetables	3/4 cup	1 cup
Grains	1-2 oz. equivalent	2 oz. equivalent
Meats	1-2 oz. equivalent	2 oz. equivalent
Fluid Milk	1 cup	1 cup

OVS BREAKFAST = REIMBURSABLE MEAL

- Three food components must be OFFERED in the required minimum daily amounts
 - Fruit (or vegetables), grains, and fluid milk food components MUST be OFFERED daily
- At least 4 food ITEMS from the 3 components must be OFFERED to the student
- Students MUST select at least 3, or up to 4, food ITEMS in the required minimum daily amounts
- 1 of the 3 items TAKEN must be at least a ½ cup fruit (or vegetable)
- Students may choose NO MORE than 4 items that will be covered under the breakfast meal price
- A student can select duplicate foods, as breakfast counts ITEMS selected from the 3 components
- We realize this is slightly confusing — **the Nutritional Services staff are available to assist students**

The OVS breakfast meal pattern requires minimum daily amounts of each component to be offered for specific grade levels.

COMPONENT	GRADE K-6	GRADE 7-12
Fruit (or veggies)	1 cup	1 cup
Grains	1-2 oz. equivalent	1-2 oz. equivalent
Fluid Milk	1 cup	1 cup
(Meat/ Meat Alternate)	Can substitute 1 oz. of Meat/MA for 1 oz of grains after the required minimum daily amount of grains is met.	

Meal Pricing

Under the OVS option, meal prices are the same regardless of whether the student takes the minimum or maximum food components/items allowed – you **DO NOT** pay less if you take less, or pay more if you take more. The reimbursable meal cost deducted from a student’s account pays for the maximum 5 components at lunch and 4 items at breakfast, each in the required minimum daily amounts. Students may purchase additional items via a la carte if desired.

School breakfast and lunch meals not only provide necessary nutrition and energy for students throughout the school day, but are also affordable, appetizing, and convenient meal options!

Additional information is available upon request. Suggestions and feedback are welcome to help us continue to enhance the Nutritional Services Program! Please feel free to contact:

Amy Hennigar

Director of Nutritional Services, Northwood-Kensett CSD

ahennigar@nkvikings.com