- of the food-based menu planning alternative, FCS may approve variations in the food components of the breakfast on an experimental or on a continuing basis in any school where there is evidence that such variations are nutritionally sound and are necessary to meet ethnic, religious, or economic needs.
- (e) Nutrient Standard Menu Planning. (1) Adjusted nutrient levels. (i) At a minimum, schools that choose the nutrient standard menu planning alternative and that have children age 2 enrolled shall ensure that the nutrition standards in paragraph (a) of this section and the required preschool levels for nutrients and calories in paragraph (b)(1) of this section are met except that, such schools have the option of either using the nutrient and calorie levels for preschool children in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, or developing separate nutrient levels for this age group. The methodology for determining such levels will be available in menu planning guidance material provided by FCS.
- (ii) At a minimum, schools shall offer meals to children based on the required grade groups in paragraph (b)(1) of this section. However, schools may, at their option, offer meals to children using the age groups and their corresponding nutrient and calorie levels in paragraph (c)(2) of this section or, following guidance provided by FCS, develop their own age or grade groups and their corresponding nutrient and calorie levels. However, if only one age or grade is outside the established levels, schools may use the levels for the majority of children regardless of the option selected.
- (2) Contents of reimbursable meal and offer versus serve. (i) Minimum requirements. For the purposes of this menu planning alternative, a reimbursable breakfast shall include a minimum of three menu items as defined in § 220.2. All menu items or foods offered as part of the reimbursable meal may be considered as contributing towards meeting the nutrition standards in paragraph (a) of this section and the appropriate nutrient and calorie levels in paragraphs (b) or (e)(1) of this section, whichever is applicable, except for those foods that are considered foods of minimal nutritional value as provided for in § 220.2(i-1) which are not offered as part of a menu item in a reimbursable meal. Such reimbursable breakfasts, as offered, shall meet the established nutrition standards in paragraph (a) of this section and the appropriate nutrient and calorie levels in paragraphs (b) or (e)(1) of this section, whichever is

- applicable, when averaged over a school week.
- (ii) Offer versus serve. Each participating school shall offer its students at least three menu items as required by paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section. Under offer versus serve, senior high students must select at least two menu items and may decline a maximum of one menu item offered. At the discretion of the school food authority, students below the senior high level may also participate in offer versus serve. The price of a reimbursable breakfast shall not be affected if a student declines a menu item or requests smaller portions. State educational agencies shall define 'senior high.
- (3) Nutrient analysis under Nutrient Standard Menu Planning. School food authorities choosing the nutrient analysis alternative shall conduct nutrient analysis on all menu items or foods offered as part of the reimbursable meal. However, those foods that are considered as foods of minimal nutritional value as provided for in § 220.2(i–1) which are not offered as part of a menu item in a reimbursable meal shall not be included. Such analysis shall be over the course of each school week.
- (4) The National Nutrient Database and software specifications. (i) Nutrient analysis shall be based on information provided in the National Nutrient Database for Child Nutrition Programs. This database shall be incorporated into software used to conduct nutrient analysis. Upon request, FCS will provide information about the database to software companies that wish to develop school food service software systems.
- (ii) Any software used to conduct nutrient analysis shall be evaluated beforehand by FCS or by an FCS designee and, as submitted, has been determined to meet the minimum requirements established by FCS. However, such review does not constitute endorsement by FCS or USDA. Such software shall provide the capability to perform all functions required after the basic data has been entered including calculation of weighted averages and the optional combining of analysis of the breakfast and lunch programs as provided in paragraph (e)(5) of this section.
- (5) Determination of weighted averages. (i) Menu items and foods offered as part of a reimbursable meal shall be analyzed based on portion sizes and projected serving amounts and shall be weighted based on their proportionate contribution to the meals. Therefore, in determining whether

- meals satisfy nutritional requirements, menu items or foods more frequently offered will be weighted more heavily than menu items or foods which are less frequently offered. Such weighting shall be done in accordance with guidance issued by FCS as well as that provided by the software used.
- (ii) An analysis of all menu items and foods offered in the menu over each school week shall be computed for calories and for each of the following nutrients: protein; vitamin A; vitamin C; iron; calcium; total fat; saturated fat; and sodium. The analysis shall also include the dietary components of cholesterol and dietary fiber.
- (iii) At its option, a school food authority may combine analysis of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Such analysis shall be proportionate to the levels of participation in the two programs in accordance to guidance issued by FCS.
- (6) Comparing average nutrient levels. Once the appropriate procedures of paragraph (e)(5) of this section have been completed, the results shall be compared to the appropriate nutrient and calorie levels, by age/grade group, in paragraphs (b)(1) or (b)(2) of this section or the levels developed in accordance with paragraph (e)(1) of this section, whichever is applicable to determine the school week's average. In addition, comparisons shall be made to the nutrition standards provided in paragraph (a) of this section in order to determine the degree of conformity over the school week.
- (7) Adjustments based on students' selections. The results obtained under paragraph (e)(5) and (e)(6) of this section shall be used to adjust future menu cycles to accurately reflect production and the frequency with which menu items and foods are offered. Menus may require further analysis and comparison, depending on the results obtained in paragraph (e)(6) of this section when production and selection patterns of students change. The school food authority may need to consider modifications to the menu items and foods offered based on student selections as well as modifications to recipes and other specifications to ensure that the nutrition standards provided in paragraph (a) of this section and the appropriate calorie and nutrient levels in paragraphs (b) or (e)(1) of this section, whichever is applicable, are
- (8) Standardized recipes. Under Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, standardized recipes shall be developed and followed. A standardized recipe is one that was tested to provide an established yield and quantity through