

# Nurturing Healthy Eaters in the Classroom

EARLY AND MIDDLE YEARS



## Caregiver's Job

What food to pack

## School's Job

When & where students eat

## Student's Job

Whether and how much to eat

## Positive Eating Environment

- Have set meal and snack times; avoid grazing.
- Limit distractions such as screen time.
- Talk with children in casual conversation. Save nutrition education for the classroom instead of at meal times.

## Natural Hunger & Fullness Cues

- Allow students to control their own intake – don't specify a certain number of bites.
- Allow students to eat food in any order they choose – no need to finish one food before another.
- Trust and respect students when they say or signal they are full or still hungry.

## Build Trust With Students & Families

- Respect that families may define "healthy food" differently, and children have different health needs.
- Allow students to eat food items sent from home unless the food relates to an allergy. Students need to trust that their caregivers can feed them properly and teachers need to trust this as well.
- Support all families by encouraging access to reliable nutrition information such as Dietitians at HealthLinkBC (8-1-1) or from [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca).
- Refer families to breakfast, snack or lunch programs and other community food resources (such as food banks) when needed.

## Teach Nutrition In A Positive Way

- Teach about a variety of foods, focusing on the benefits of fueling the mind and body.
- Keep all messages positive for example "eating a variety of foods gives you energy to play and think." Avoid negative/fear-based statements like "x food is not healthy."
- Focus on behaviors, such as regular meals, sleep, and physical activity to feel good not for weight control. Weighing, using weight tables or charts, or calorie counting activities can hinder health behaviours.
- Role model positive body image by encouraging body positivity and diversity. Avoid sharing personal views about food and body weight. Each person's body is different, and we should respect, accept, and celebrate these differences!



## Eating Should Be Enjoyable

**General eating advice:** The eating advice in this article is based on Elyn Satter's principles and guidelines. For more about Satter's work, see: [ellynsatterinstitute.org](http://ellynsatterinstitute.org)

**Adapted with permission from the Registered Dietitians of the Manitoba School Nutrition Action Group.**

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