



Interesting Resources for Lunch Boxes for Young Children in Child Care

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Lunch Boxes with Young Children in Child Care Settings Teacher and Center Strategies

Janice Fletcher, EdD, Beth Price, Samantha Ramsay, PhD, RD, LD, Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD

When young children eat a meal brought from home, an attentive and intentional teacher at the table is critical to keep children safe and secure. Teachers at the lunch box table support learning about food and eating behaviors as they sit with children. In extreme cases where a teacher is distracted, children may not eat at all if they do not get help opening their food.

Have a serious strategy- rich discussion among staff about what provides the best possible lunch box mealtime. Make a list of ways to have a safe, relaxed, stimulating lunch box environment. Consider routines and schedules, setting the table environment, the food, children's developmental skills and learning, safety and sanitation, staff roles, and working with families. Use the strategies below to jump-start your discussion.

Routines and Schedules

- Develop routines for getting lunch boxes to the table. For example, have a routine so the table is set with plates and utensils before children come to the table. Children can help with this.
- Set lunch boxes out and have them open prior to the children coming to the table.
- Schedule lunch box meals to include time for getting the food out of the packaging, as well as time for eating and interacting.
- Plan schedules and routines that make transitions to and from the mealtime efficient.
- When children come to the table, make certain each has at least one thing to eat or drink as they wait for the other children to get their items opened or heated.
- Help children learn to time their eating, even in the face of a stimulating environment. Use phrases to designate the beginning of the mealtime, the middle of the mealtime, and the end of the mealtime. Talk about getting plates filled with the food from the lunch box, then beginning to eat the food, then how starting to feel full and then, as the mealtime comes to an end, beginning to clear off the table and getting ready to wash hands.
- Have an end-of-mealtime transition plan for closing and returning lunch boxes to children's cubbies.



Setting the Table Environment

- Provide plates, utensils, and napkins for the meal. Provide child-sized utensils that are restaurant grade plastic, or stainless steel. Offer plates that are sturdy so that wet foods do not leak through and heavier foods do not make the plate unstable.
- Have a plan for where to put the lunch boxes while the children eat. For example, have children take all the food out of the boxes and place it on plates, then remove the boxes from the table to a nearby shelf.
- Have child-sized pitchers of water and milk at the table for children to pour into cups provided by the center.
- If microwave ovens are used, be certain they are near the table, so the teacher does not have to go too far to heat foods.
- Roll a table-side cart near the teacher's chair. Put plates, cups, utensils, napkins, paper towels for spills and clean up, and milk or juice pitchers on the cart. Be sure there are extra utensils and equipment on the cart. Include a small clip board and pen with a stack of blank "daily eating sheets" for the teacher to put in each child's lunch box.
- Place a trash can within easy reach of the teacher so trash from accumulated food packaging can be disposed of quickly. This keeps the table environment more organized and appealing, as well as removing possible choking hazards.

Child Development and Learning

- Encourage competence in children as they learn eating skills. Ask children if they want help opening items, rather than automatically opening the food for the child.
- Teach children to ask for help, and to wait their turn for the teacher to help.
- Because children bring their food, there is an inherent interest factor in what each has brought from home. Encourage child-to-child discussions about their food, but teach the words, yours and mine and ours. Because brought-from-home food is not 100% reliable in terms of choking hazards or contamination, make and enforce a routine of no sharing.
- Build food vocabulary among the children taking advantage of the wide variety of different foods the children bring to the table...smooth, silky, crunchy, colors, flavors, crispness, liquid, solid, fruits, vegetables, meat, grains, dairy.
- Help children learn how to open items that commonly come in lunchboxes...juice boxes and sandwich bags are examples. Plan a small group time activity or have a dramatic play center set up for such learning.

- Determine what strategies or rules will be used for supporting children as they make choices of what and whether to eat food from their lunchboxes. If a variety of nutrient-dense foods arrive in a child's lunch box, it is easy to accept that the child will be gaining adequate nutrition at lunch, no matter what they choose from their meal. Prevailing research suggests that adults should decide what is presented to eat and the child decides how much or whether to eat (Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding, 2009). Working with parents on what is presented in the lunch box is essential.
- The variety of food that children bring and the ways they eat those foods make the typical lunch box table look something akin to a three-ring circus. This interesting lunch scene attracts and distracts children around the table. Have a repertoire of phrases to help children stay on task as they eat and to help them attend to the food they are eating. Examples are, "I see you have applesauce." "Are you enjoying your sandwich?" "Your soup has noodles." "You opened your yogurt and got your spoon ready to eat it." "You ate your potato and then you started on peaches in your fruit cup."

Safety and Sanitation

- Arrange routines for getting started, so the teacher can be at the table with all the children as they sit down and begin eating. Children should never be left alone with the plethora of choking hazards and challenges found in the food and packaging in the lunch box.
- Be certain teachers practice fastidious hand washing and wear plastic gloves to remove food from children's lunch boxes.
- It is common for children's lunch boxes to include foods that are possible choking hazards, such as raisins, raw carrots, grapes, and nuts. Send parents a list of foods that are choking hazards and therefore not acceptable for bringing to the program. Because children will sometimes bring the unsafe foods anyway, it is especially important for teachers to be prepared to know what to do when a child chokes on food. Insist on annual training on CPR and First Aid.
- Do not return partially eaten food, food that has been opened, or food that must be refrigerated or heated to a lunch box. Sometimes child care providers want parents to see the results of a child's mealtime consumption. They may return uneaten food to the lunch box. This practice presents a food safety hazard. Note that it is fairly common for situations to arise where a child may cry, or say, "I'm hungry," on the way home. Parents look in the lunch box for leftover tidbits to quiet and satisfy the child. Parents may even pack the uneaten food in the next day's lunch box. Food that has been partially eaten is contaminated and becomes a growing medium for bacteria. Staff can inform parents about how much their child ate, using putting a simple "daily eating sheet" in the child's lunch box. (See below in the Working with Parents section.)



- Sometime a child has a food allergy that is so severe, that even what seems like minor contact with that food can cause a serious, even deadly reaction. Parents of all of the children must be alerted to the prohibition of the food item from lunch boxes. Careful scrutiny of all the children's lunch boxes for the allergen must be conducted.

Staff Roles

- Make sure teacher-child ratios allow an adult to sit with children at each table.
- Ideally a lunch aide in the room can move around helping children with food packaging and preparation, while an adult sits at the tables with children.
- Staff should eat a bit of food for modeling, but they should not be required to eat their true meal during this time. Lunch box service obligations are so demanding that staff hardly have time to eat. They typically spend a majority of time opening, serving, and keeping children safe with the food from their lunch boxes. Absolute attention to the children and their lunches is essential for safety reasons. A bonus, after safety, is helping children learn to self-regulate, to establish food preferences, to choose amounts to eat, and to learn about being in a group at mealtimes.
- Be mindful of the number of times the teacher has to get up and down from the table. Efficient routines, well-placed mealtime equipment, and appropriate ratios can support the teacher to focus attention on supporting children.

The Food

- Children need a variety of food. Offer suggestions to parents that include foods from different food groups. See “Lunch Box Tips for Parents: What to Pack in Lunch Boxes for Young Children in Childcare.” <http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/feeding>
- Write a policy to guide parents as they select food for their children's lunches.
- Always offer water at the table. Offer milk to supplement children's lunch box/sack lunches. This is wise, since studies of lunch box and sack lunch meals for young children show insufficient levels of calcium in the food sent from home (Sweitzer, Briley, and Robert-Gray, 2009).
- Children can independently pour water and milk from child sized pitchers to their cups, increasing their intake of fluids and calcium while also helping develop hand skills.
- Sometimes children have too little food in their lunch box. Be sure to have some non-perishable items (crackers, cereal, pretzels) on hand to supplement their lunches.



Working with Parents around Food from Home

- Distribute the handout for parents called, “Lunch Box Tips for Parents: Lunch Boxes for Young Children in Child Care Settings” and “Lunch Box Tips for Parents: What to Pack in Lunch Boxes for Young Children in Childcare.” <http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/feeding>
- If lunch boxes routinely include foods that are high in fat, sugar, and sodium, and low in milk items and fruits or vegetables, then parent education becomes essential. Policies from the center about what foods are appropriate offer a teacher or administrator a common tool for helping increase the nutrient value of the lunch box foods in the center.
- Be certain that parents know if the program has equipment for heating and refrigerating foods. This impacts what parents send for the child’s lunch and how it is prepared.
- Have a family-friendly plan to refrigerate lunches. Place a rolling cart or large basket near the door where children arrive. Parents or children can place lunch boxes or sacks on the cart or in the basket. Take the lunches for storage in a refrigerator.
- If the center cannot provide refrigeration for lunches, be certain parents do not pack perishable items, even if they use thermal lunch boxes or ice packs. Researchers have tested temperatures using both of these and have found them to be inadequate for keeping food safe (Sweitzer, Briley, and Robert-Gray, 2009).
- Identify choking hazards for parents and make policies that prohibit these from lunch boxes. Foods that are common choking hazards for young children are raisins, uncooked carrots and hard raw vegetables, grapes, nuts, chunks of peanut butter, chunks of meat, hard candies, lollipops, popcorn, and whole hotdogs or hotdogs cut in rounds. Suggest that parents cut grapes in half, or fourths, chop nuts, thinly spread peanut butter on bread or crackers, chop chunks of food, cut hotdogs lengthwise into quarters.
- Encourage parents to cut items such as sandwiches or pizza into small pieces for ease of eating by the child. Quarter size works for sandwiches, for example. This helps children eat more efficiently and comfortably.
- Encourage parents to package food so that children can have success. Suggest they use wax paper instead of plastic wrap. Plastic wrap sticks together while wax paper does not. Encourage parents to practice the skills for opening items at home, just as you will do at the center. Suggest that parents snip the seals on pre-packaged dry food before putting food in the lunch box. For foods that are highly packaged, suggest emptying the food into a baggie before putting it in the lunch box.
- Talk with parents about portion sizes of foods that are appropriate for their child’s unique needs. Regularly report how much of the lunch the parents prepared is eaten by their child. Avoid sending uneaten food back home in the lunchbox. This practice poses a food safety issue.



Using a Daily Sheet

Use a daily eating sheet for staff to mark what a child ate. Place the report in the child's lunch box right from the table. Keep this sheet simple. Keep a small clipboard on the cart-side table with forms for each child.

If there is an exceptional amount of food eaten or not eaten, then a face to face conversation is necessary and would not be communicated via a daily sheet.

SAMPLE				
Child Care Lunch Box Daily Sheet				
Day _____	Child's Name _____	Staff _____		
FOOD ITEM	AMOUNT EATEN			
	NONE	FOURTH	HALF	ALL
Sandwich/entrée/soup	x _____	x _____	x _____	x _____
Beverage	x _____	x _____	x _____	x _____
Fruit	x _____	x _____	x _____	x _____
Vegetables	x _____	x _____	x _____	x _____
Grains/ breads/ crackers/chips	x _____	x _____	x _____	x _____
Cookies/pudding/jello/cake	x _____	x _____	x _____	x _____
Other _____	x _____	x _____	x _____	x _____



Lunch Box Tips for Parents: Lunch Boxes for Young Children in Childcare

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Sending a lunch box along with your child to a child care program connects you, your child, and the child care staff in an intimate way. Eating is essential to survival.

Supporting children to be healthy and happy around mealtimes is an adult responsibility that is dependent upon both the parent and the staff. Here are suggestions for building a bridge among parents, staff, and the children who eat the food from the lunch box.

- Ask about meal service style. Find out if the program provides beverages or partial meals, utensils, napkins, or plates.
- Ask staff if the program has a refrigerator to store lunch box food that must be maintained at a cool temperature. If yes, find out how to access the refrigerator when you bring your child's lunch box to the program.
- Ask if the program has a way to heat foods that must be cooked. If yes, use microwave-safe containers. Read container packaging to be certain.
- Present items in an easy-to-eat fashion that is friendly to a child's mouth and chewing and swallowing skills. For example, cut sandwiches into four quarters. Slice pizza into small squares. Offer items that do not require slicing or peeling. Remember the teacher has many children to help at the meal. The teacher will also be helping keep children safe and happy, as well as supporting them in getting their food ready to eat.
- Keep serving sizes small. Watch your child eat at home, and then pack about that size portion for lunch. Ask how much your child typically eats at the child care program.
- Pack foods that can make your child feel successful. Think about your child's skills for opening items independently.
- Be considerate to your child's teacher. Pack items that are reasonably easy to open and that do not require a lot of preparation. Use wax paper instead of plastic wrap, for example. Plastic wrap sticks together while wax paper does not. Practice at home with children to open containers. If you buy prepackaged foods, snip the seals before putting them in the lunch box. For foods that are highly packaged, empty the food into an easy to open container before you put the food in the lunch box.
- When food in the lunch box needs to be refrigerated, be sure to follow the center's rules for getting the lunch box in the cooler.
- Check to be certain water for the children to drink is readily available at the table.



- Choose foods that represent good nutrition. Offer meats dairy, fruits, vegetables, and grains. Offer these in the lunchbox, and trust the teacher to help your child learn to eat these foods.
- Be careful of emotional decision making about what goes into the meal. Sometimes parents feel guilty about leaving their children, and try to make up for that guilt by filling a lunch box with treats. Remember...this is the child's nutrition for a large portion of the day. Thoughtfully choose the best food you can for your child.
- Some child care programs encourage staff to return uneaten food in the lunch box. This is a hazard to your child. Though you may be able to see what your child ate, the chance of food borne illness is present in food that has been tasted. Do not re-use the food. Discard the food, and clean the lunch box thoroughly. *Note: Sometimes children are hungry or cranky on the way home from child care. Resist the dangerous temptation to feed the child food from the already used lunch box.*
- You will want to know what your child ate at their child care meal(s). Ask staff if the center might provide you with a daily eating sheet that helps you know how much the child ate.
- Clean your child's lunch box daily. Be sure to use a disinfectant.
- Pack a little extra love in the lunchbox. Send a token of your affection in the lunch box. This can be a little picture you draw on a piece of paper, a simple note, a picture of you printed from the computer, or something you cut out of the news or from a magazine.



RESPONSIVENESS, MEALTIMES, and HEALTHY EATING

Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD, Janice Fletcher, EdD and Amy Kowash

Children develop best when the environment is RESPONSIVE. Mealtimes in group settings are most successful for children when the people, the food, and the setting are responsive. Are you reading children's cues!!!!

STRATEGIES

WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF ADULTS AT THE TABLE?

Children need adults to eat with them. This provides opportunities for modeling. Adults help teach children hygiene and social conventions. When a relaxed, responsive adult is near, children are more likely to feel relaxed and secure. Children need adults to keep them safe, including giving support to hygiene, watching for possible choking hazards, and helping children negotiate conflicts.

USE PARENTS AS VOLUNTEERS AT MEALTIMES

Hold a parent workshop on feeding children. Model best practices by having new volunteers sit with you at one of the children's tables. Be sure to give them things to read about feeding, such as [How to Get Your Kid to Eat, But Not Too Much](#) by Ellyn Satter (Bull Publishers, San Francisco).

TALK, LISTEN, and WATCH

Observe language and be responsive to the child's vocabulary and understanding of the meaning of words. Be aware of the words you use. The words you use casually may be new words to the children.

Learn children's thoughts about food by analyzing the vocabulary they use. Note how they put foods into categories. Listen to what children say. Reply with an intentional response rather than a casual response. Reflect on the cue the child gave you, and then respond.

HOW MUCH???????

Teach children how to determine bite size. Talk with them about serving size and how much they pick up with their eating utensils. Make child size eating utensils available. Choose serving utensils that hold a small serving size. (An ice cream scoop works great for many foods!) Provide plates that are about the size of salad plates. Children need smaller servings than adults do. If you serve the children's plates, ask them to tell you how much to put on the plate.



A WORD ABOUT GAGGING AND CHOKING

When children gag or choke because they have too much in their mouths, tell them to “spit it out!” This is not a time to teach about bite size. This is a time to keep the child safe. After the child recovers from the emotional trauma of choking, talk about bite size, chewing, and swallowing. Later, remind the child about “the time you choked.” Have a gentle conversation with them about how much food to put safely on the eating utensils, and then follow up with modeling and direction at the table.

Be strict about enforcing rules to prevent choking. Some common rules are: sit on your bottom while you eat; finish chewing and swallowing before you leave the table; stay out of other children’s space while they are eating, and do not talk while you are chewing.

“I WANT TO SIT BESIDE YOU WHEN WE EAT, OK?”

Mealtimes are social events. Use community style service where children serve themselves from bowls and pour their drinks from pitchers. Arrange the eating environment so children can serve themselves and share the process of getting food. Even two year old children can serve part of their meals. If self-serving the whole meal is impossible or impractical, make at least some things self-served. At the very least, give the children opportunities to say how much goes on their plates.

KNIFE, FORK, SPOON, or FINGERS!!

Give children knives, forks, and spoons and serving utensils, bowls, and pitchers. The opportunity to use these allows children to exercise muscles, develop skills that are socially valued, and be more efficient in eating. Remember that children’s muscles are under construction! Strength and endurance are not yet established. Choose a time to teach about how to hold and use utensils when children are relaxed and their muscles are not fatigued. Talking about how to use the utensils works best when children are not too hungry and not too tired. Small group times are good for talking about serving yourself and using utensils. Offer knives, forks, and spoons for a small group activity, when the children are not so hungry, and let them practice different ways of using utensils.

“MY HAND IS DIRTY!”

Make opportunities for children to learn rules about eating and hygiene that are appropriate for “mine,” “yours,” and “ours.” Teach about hygiene when children serve themselves. Help children to use “mine,” “yours,” and “ours,” as they learn how to avoid cross contamination. Washing hands and faces are necessary.

Teach children to thoroughly wash before and after eating. Teachers are models. As teachers and children wash, teachers can describe what children are doing. “You are using warm water and soap. You are washing between your fingers.”

Responsiveness (cont.)

A WORD ABOUT NAPKINS

Even very young children know when their faces are dirty and they know when their hands are messy. They feel it and they see it! Make napkins available. Help children use them when they let you know they feel dirty.

“WHAT IS THIS WHITE STUFF?” AND NUTRITION EDUCATION

Help children learn about food and how food helps them grow and have energy and good health. Have conversations about where foods come from and how certain foods give us more energy, and how other foods help us have strong bones. Talk about which ones help us run faster and which ones help us grow taller. (Be sure you know the difference in which foods affect energy and which affect growth.) If you do not know which foods do what, give general information. For example, say, “Food keeps us healthy,” or “Food helps us grow,” or “Food gives us energy.”

Be a model who tastes foods that are new to children. Your efforts at tasting, and then telling about the food, will give children courage to try the new food. Note that peers are effective models, as well. But be careful not to compare how or what children eat. Eating and coming to understand food is an individual issue.

Remember foods may be new to the children, though they are commonly known in your culture or environment. Give names to foods. Talk about how foods are similar to ones the children already know. Talk about the characteristics of food and help children make simple food categories. “These grapefruit pieces are tangy, just like the orange we had the other day.”

Integrate food activities throughout the day. Include food and food “talk” in dramatic play, stories and books. Introduce new foods in looking and tasting games, where children get to try foods without having to worry that the food is their meal. (Have napkins near in case children really dislike the taste.)

Teach about foods and categories in the food pyramid, but do not expect children to conceptualize the pyramid. Include the words “grains, vegetables and fruits, meats, and dairy products.” Typically, young children do not think in the abstract. Most do not understand the hierarchy of the food pyramid. They can, however, begin to put foods in categories.

Avoid using the terms “good food” and “bad food.” Talk instead about how our bodies *need* grains, fruits and vegetables. Be sure to help children assign names and discover similarities and differences as they learn about food.

CAUTIONS

AVOID FORCING CHILDREN TO EAT

Do not force children to eat. Monitor comments to children about amounts they eat. Subtle forcing is as hurtful as is obvious forcing. Have someone make notes of comments you make at the table with children. Analyze your comments to see what messages you send to children about eating. Be aware of phrases that hinder a child in developing self-regulation.

SERVING SIZE

If you must serve the children's plates, do not serve large portions. Be careful of size of second helpings. Though a child may ask for more, do not assume the child wants an extra big amount or even as much as was in the first serving. Give the child a choice of how much! Offer small size plates for young children.

ACTIVE MOVEMENT

Pay attention to healthy eating habits and active movement. Teach children about how our bodies need food to help us move. Then be sure you model moving with the children. Plan active movement activities and time for active play in your schedule. Plan very active outdoor play, everyday, if possible.

ADULT ROLE

Avoid standing, walking around the tables, or doing multiple tasks while the children eat. Arrange people, the serving bowls, and the children so that mealtime provides the pleasure of sitting down together in a relaxed fashion.

Do not make lunch break time for staff. This is time for adults to respond and support children's attempts at successful eating. Be mindful of children's cues and respond with as much thought as you would use in other parts of the curriculum day. If you must take a break at mealtime, advocate that those who eat with the children follow good practices.

Sensibilidad de respuesta a las necesidades de los niños a la hora de las comidas

Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD, Janice Fletcher EdD, and Amy Kowash

Los niños se desarrollan mejor cuando el ambiente es SENSIBLE. Las horas de las comidas en ambientes grupales son más exitosas para los niños cuando las personas, la comida, y la distribución del ambiente son sensibles a sus necesidades.

ESTRATEGIAS

CUÁL ES EL PAPEL DE LOS ADULTOS EN LA MESA?

Los niños necesitan que los adultos coman con ellos! Esto proporciona oportunidades para modelar comportamientos. Los adultos enseñan a los niños higiene y convenciones sociales. Es más probable que los niños se sientan relajados y seguros cuando un adulto relajado está cerca. Los niños necesitan a los adultos para que los mantengan a salvo, incluyendo el darles apoyo respecto a higiene, posibles riesgos de atoro, y conflictos que los niños negocian.

UTILIZE A LOS PADRES DE FAMILIA COMO VOLUNTARIOS A LAS HORAS DE LAS COMIDAS

Sostenga un taller de entrenamiento para padres de familia acerca de alimentación infantil. Modele las practicas más apropiadas sentando a los voluntarios nuevos junto con Ud. a una de las mesas de los niños. Asegúrese de darles cosas para leer tales como Cómo hacer que su niño coma pero no demasiado de Ellyn Satter (Publicaciones Bull, San Francisco).

HABLE, ESCUCHE y OBSERVE

Observe el lenguaje y sea sensible a las necesidades de vocabulario de los niños y a su comprensión del significado de las palabras. Sea consciente de las palabras que usa. Las palabras que Ud. usa de manera casual peden ser palabras nuevas para los niños.

Entérese de los pensamientos de los niños acerca de alimentos mediante el análisis del vocabulario que ellos usan. Note cómo ponen los alimentos en categorías. Escuche atentamente lo que dicen. Piense cuidadosamente sus respuestas en lugar de responder en forma casual.



Responsiveness (cont.)

CUÁNTO???????

Enseñe a los niños cómo determinar el tamaño de un bocado. Hable con ellos acerca del tamaño de una porción y de cuánto recogen con sus utensilios para servir. Mantenga disponibles cubiertos de tamaño apropiado para niños. Escoja utensilios de servir que contengan porciones pequeñas (Una cuchara para servir helado funciona muy bien!). Los niños necesitan porciones más pequeñas que los adultos. Si Ud. sirve los platos de los niños haga las segundas y terceras porciones más pequeñas que las cantidades iniciales. Si Ud. sirve los platos de los niños pídale a ellos que le digan cuánto poner en su plato.

UNA PALABRA ACERCA DE NAUSEAS Y ATOROS

Si los niños tienen nauseas y se están atorando porque tienen demasiado en su boca, dígalos "Escúpelos!". Este no es el momento para enseñarles acerca del tamaño de un bocado. Este es un momento para mantener al niño a salvo. Después de que el niño se recupere del trauma emocional de atorarse, hable del tamaño de un bocado, masticar, y tragar o pasar el bocado. Haga recordar al niño de pensar acerca de cuánta comida poner en los utensilios de comer de manera segura.

Sea estricto acerca de imponer reglas para prevenir atoros. Algunas reglas comunes son: siéntate mientras comes; termina de masticar y pasar la comida antes de dejar la mesa; mantente fuera del espacio de otros niños mientras ellos están comiendo.

"QUIERO SENTARME A TU LADO CUANDO COMAMOS, ESTÁ BIEN?"

Las horas de las comidas son grandes eventos sociales. Use servicio estilo familiar. Arregle el ambiente alimentario de modo que los niños puedan servirse solos y compartir el proceso de obtener alimentos. Si es imposible o impráctico que se sirvan solos toda la comida, haga que se sirvan solos por lo menos algunas cosas. Como mínimo déle a los niños oportunidades para decir cuánto va en sus platos.

CUCHILLO, TENEDOR, CUCHARA, o DEDOS!!

Déle a los niños cuchillos, tenedores, y cucharas. La oportunidad de usar todos estos tres permite a los niños ejercitar músculos, desarrollar habilidades que son valoradas socialmente, y ser más eficientes en comer. Recuerde que los músculos de los niños están en construcción! Fuerza y resistencia aún no están establecidas. Provea utensilios de servir, jarras, y tazones de tamaño apropiado para niños. Enséñeles acerca de cómo sujetar y usar los utensilios cuando los niños estén relajados y sus músculos no estén fatigados. Hablar de cómo utilizar los cubiertos y utensilios funciona mejor cuando los niños no tienen mucho

Responsiveness (cont.)

hambre y no están muy cansados. Momentos de grupo pequeño son buenos para hablar acerca de servirse solos y utilizar cubiertos y utensilios.

“MI MANO ESTÁ SUCIA!”

Enseñe a los niños acerca de qué es TUYO, MÍO, y NUESTRO. Haga oportunidades para que los niños aprendan las reglas acerca de comer y de higiene que son apropiadas para “tuyo, mío, y nuestro”. Enséñeles acerca de higiene cuando se sirven solos. Ayúdeles a determinar qué es “tuyo, mío, y nuestro” y cómo evitar contaminación cruzada.

Enseñe a los niños a lavarse las manos correcta y completamente antes y después de comer. Las profesoras pueden modelar ésto! Asegúrese de describir lo que los niños están haciendo mientras se van lavando las manos. “Estás usando agua tibia. Te estás lavando entre los dedos”.

UNA PALABRA ACERCA DE SERVILLETAS

.Aún los niños más pequeños saben cuando sus caras están sucias y ellos saben cuando sus manos están sucias. Ellos lo sienten y lo ven! Tenga servilletas disponibles. Ayude a los niños a usarlas cuando ellos le dejan saber que se sienten sucios.

“QUÉ ES ESTA COSA BLANCA?”

Ayude a los niños a aprender acerca de los alimentos. Modele probar alimentos que son nuevos para los niños. Recuerde que los alimentos pueden ser nuevos para ellos, a pesar de ser comúnmente conocidos en el ambiente. Nombre los alimentos. Hable acerca de como los alimentos son similares. Hable de las características de los alimentos y ayude a los niños a formar categorías de alimentos.

Integre actividades alimenticias a través del día. Incluya alimentos y “conversación de alimentos” en el juego dramático, historias, y libros. Enseñe acerca de los alimentos y de las categorías de la Pirámide de Alimentos, pero no espere que los niños conceptualicen la pirámide. Incluya las palabras: granos, vegetales, y frutas, carnes, y productos lácteos. Típicamente, los niños pequeños no piensan en abstracto. La mayoría no entiende la jerarquía de la pirámide. Sin embargo, ellos pueden empezar a poner alimentos en categorías. Evite usar los términos “buenos alimentos” y “malos alimentos”. En lugar de eso hable de como nuestros cuerpos *necesitan* granos, frutas, y vegetales. Asegúrese de ayudar a los niños a asignar nombres y descubrir similitudes y diferencias en tanto que aprenden acerca de alimentos.



Responsiveness (cont.)

ADVERTENCIAS

EVITE FORZAR A LOS NIÑOS A COMER

No obligue a los niños a comer. Monitoree comentarios hacia los niños acerca de las cantidades que ellos comen. Forzamiento subrepticio es tan dañino como forzamiento obvio. Haga que alguien tome notas de los comentarios que Ud. hace en la mesa con los niños. Analice sus comentarios para ver qué mensajes está Ud. enviando a los niños acerca de comer. Esté consciente de frases que dificultan que un niño desarrolle auto regulación.

TAMAÑO DE LA PORCIÓN

Si Ud. tiene que servir los platos de los niños, no les sirva porciones grandes. Sea cuidadoso acerca del tamaño de las segundas porciones. A pesar de un niño puede pedir más no asuma que el niño quiere una cantidad extra grande o ni siquiera tanto como había en la primera porción. Déle al niño la opción de escoger cuánto desea.

ROL del ADULTO

No haga del almuerzo su hora de descanso. “éste es momento de responder y apoyar los intentos de los niños de ser exitosos en comer. Si Ud. debe tomar un descanso a la hora de la comida, insista que aquellos que comen con los niños sigan buenas prácticas. Evite pararse, caminar alrededor de las mesas, o hacer tareas múltiples mientras los niños comen. Organice las personas, tazones de servir, y los niños de manera que el placer de sentarse juntos esté asegurado.



Lunch Box Tips for Parents: What to Pack for Young Children in Childcare

Janice Fletcher, EdD, Beth Price, Samantha Ramsay, PhD, RD, LD, Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD

Foods in children's lunch boxes can provide the nutrients children need to support their growth and development. Those foods also provide children with enjoyment and pleasure at mealtimes, especially when children are given the opportunity to taste and eat foods they like, while also being exposed to new foods.

Here are suggestions that offer safe foods and optimize nutrients in a child's lunch:

- Never pack foods that are choking hazards. These include:
 - Hard raw vegetables and fruits such as raw carrot sticks or raw celery sticks
 - Whole grapes
 - Nuts and seeds
 - Firm, hard raisins or other dried fruit
 - Hot dogs
 - Large chunks of cheese or meat
 - Hard candy and chewing gum
 - Chunks of peanut butter
 - Marshmallows
- Prevent choking. Chop food into cubes that are no bigger than ½ inch diameter for children over three and ¼ inch for children under three.
- Aim to offer foods from low-fat meat and dairy sources.
- Select whole grain breads, cereals, and crackers.
- Offer fruits and vegetables.
- Carefully select beverages that are high in nutrients. Milk is the preferred beverage for children. Check to see if your child's center offers milk, or at least refrigeration for the lunch box, so that you can send milk for your child. If you send fruit juice in the lunch box, send 100% fruit juice, not juice cocktails or juice punch.
- Children's lunch boxes can include a dessert that is healthy and nutritious. Examples are oatmeal cookies, or pudding that has added (fortified) calcium. Read labels.
- Avoid packing foods that are high risk for causing food borne illness, unless the center has equipment to keep cold foods cold and equipment to reheat foods to appropriate temperatures. Even the best lunch boxes rarely keep foods cold enough to be safe.
- **These foods must be kept cold during storage:** milk, hummus, cheese spreads, dressing or dips, lunch meat, yogurt, eggs, cheese, pasta salad, juice box or reheated leftover meals such as lasagna/spaghetti, cooked vegetables, soup, chili, casseroles, cooked vegetables.
These foods are safe at room temperature: crackers, whole fruits, cereal, bread sticks, unopened fruit cups, scones, muffins, breads.



Foods to Pack in Lunchboxes for Children in Child Care

Samantha Ramsay, Janice Fletcher, Beth Price, Laurel Branen

Select one from each category below

SANDWICH/ENTRÉE/SOUP

Thinly spread peanut butter and jelly sandwich Tuna, turkey, ham, beef, cheese or egg salad sandwich Hummus pita or wrap Chicken noodle or tomato soup Cream cheese sandwich Fish filet sandwiches *Chopped boiled eggs	Chili Lasagna/spaghetti/ravioli Pizza *Chicken pasta salad Tortilla with cheese and refried beans Chicken or turkey wrap Black beans and rice
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GRAIN/BREADS

Graham crackers Fish crackers Scones Muffins Biscuits Cornbread	Cereal English muffins Pita bread *Granola bar Couscous salad Rice
--	---

FRUIT

Whole bananas *Peeled and sliced peaches, apricots, pears, and plum *Strawberry quartered Tangerine, orange, or grapefruit sections *Raspberries Cooked apples	Blueberries *Fruit cups in water or light syrup *Dehydrated fruit *Pineapple chopped into quarter inch cubes Kiwi *Blackberries quartered *Mango and papaya
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VEGETABLE

Cooked green beans *Chopped salad with dressing (spinach, lettuce) *Slivered carrots *Cucumbers chopped in 1/4 inch cubes *Shredded jicama and dip	Potato wedges Sliced tomatoes *Chopped red, yellow, and orange peppers Cooked broccoli Corn *Black and green chopped olives
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MILK/DAIRY

Milk *String cheese or cheese in 1/4 or 1/2 inch cubes	Cottage cheese Yogurt
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BEVERAGE

Milk Flavored Milk	Water 100% Fruit Juice
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*Be sure to prepare these foods to prevent choking hazards. For children under age three, chop into pieces no bigger than 1/4 inch in diameter. For children under age five, chop into pieces no bigger than 1/2 inch in diameter.



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What You Say Matters! Motivating Children at the Mealtime Table

Janice Fletcher EdD, and Samantha Ramsay, PhD, RD, LD, Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD

There is evidence that reinforcement works to motivate and maintain learning. Teachers reinforce mealtime behaviors and habits with what they say. Mindful teachers are *intentional and purposeful* about the power of their words on children's motivation. If you want to be intentional about what you say to encourage and reinforce a child's learning, it is wise to think about the power of words before you talk. What you say at the table matters!

Types of Comments for Reinforcement/Encouragement at Mealtimes

(See Figure 1 and 2 for examples)

- **Neutral:** These comments are impartial and offer no particular support for or against an action.
- **Person-centered:** These comments offer reinforcement that focuses on the characteristics of a child.
- **Achievement-centered:** These comment offer reinforcement on the quality of behavior.
- **Effort-centered:** These comments offer reinforcement of child's attempt at the act or behavior.
- **Process-centered:** These comments offer reinforcement of what the child is doing as the behavior is practiced, along with a supportive statement.

Which Types of Comment Works Best With Young Children?

These TWO are most EFFECTIVE

With young children, **process-centered encouragement** comes in at a tie with **effort-centered encouragement**. Young children are as motivated by encouragement of effort as they are by encouragement of their process. With people who are older than five years, however, the most effective comments are those that are process-centered reinforcements. This type of comment helps people know exactly what you are encouraging them to do or learn.

These THREE have LITTLE EFFECTIVENESS

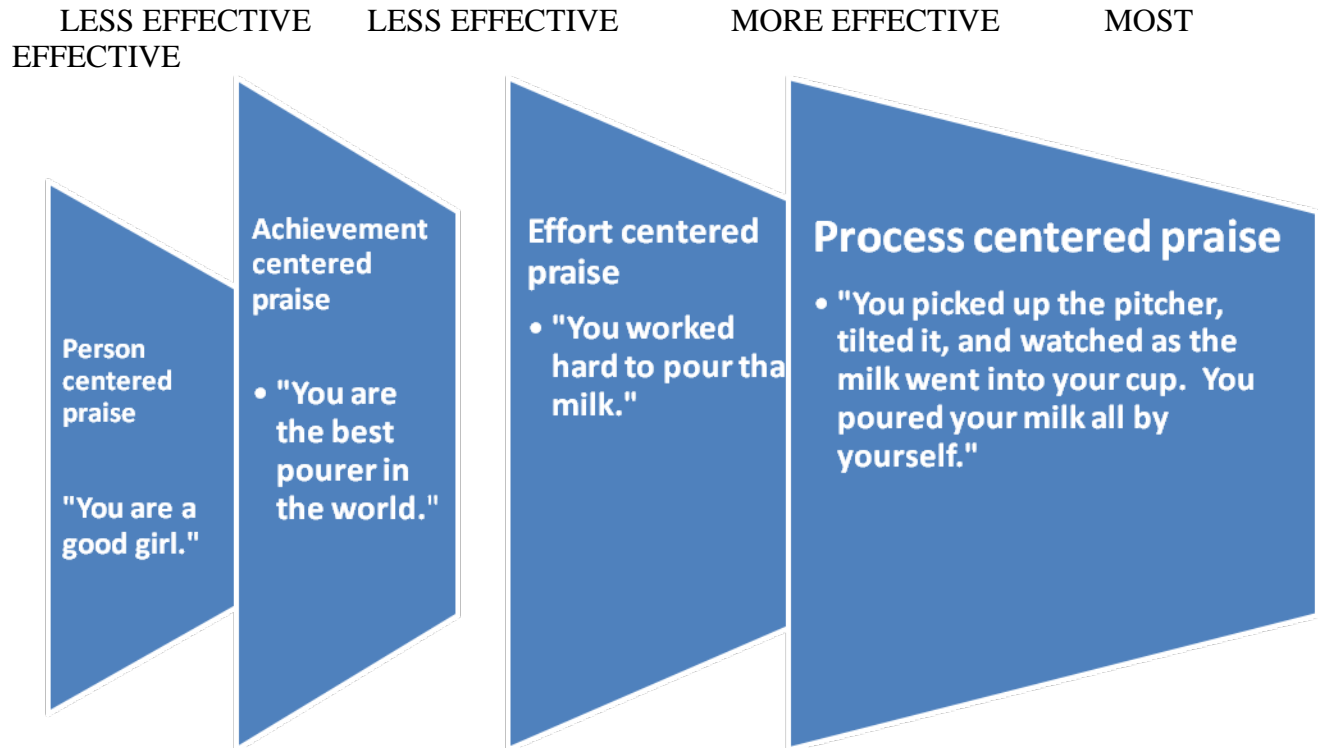
Achievement centered comments come in a distant third to effort-centered or process-centered comments for motivating children. **Person-centered comments** are only mildly effective to motivate children. **Neutral comments** have no effect.

Why should you care about what you say?

Does it take too much time and effort to use effort or process praise? Think about how your desire to be an effective teacher. We want to help children to be competent and successful. It takes time to become comfortable using effort and process-centered encouragement. You can learn to use effective encouragement comments. Practice using effort and process-centered encouragement with staff and family members when time and busyness with the children are not factors.

What You Say Really Matters

Once you know how to use effort and process-centered encouragement, it becomes easy to be intentional about using comments that reinforce children's mealtime development. You will become aware of the emptiness of person or achievement-centered praise.



Neutral comment: Teacher says, "Uh huh. I see that."

Person-centered comment: Teacher says, "Yes, you are a big girl."

Achievement-centered comment: Teacher says, "You are the best carrot-eater in the whole school."

Effort-centered comment: Teacher says, "You were brave and you worked hard to get up courage to try those carrots."

Process-centered comment: Teacher says, "You picked up that carrot. You smelled it. You tasted it. You took a bite, and then, you chewed it up, and you said you liked it. You are learning to try"