

OPTIMIZING HEALTHY EATING HABITS IN THE CLASSROOM

- **WHAT** food to pack - Parent's job
- **WHEN & WHERE** kids eat - Teacher's job
- **WHETHER & HOW MUCH** to eat - Child's job

What Teachers Need to Know

CHILDREN HAVE INNATE HUNGER & SATIETY CUES - HELP PRESERVE & PROTECT THEM

- Allow children to self-regulate their intake ➤ Don't specify a certain number of bites.
- Don't require one food to be finished before another is allowed.
- Believe and respect children when they say or signal that they are full.

TEACH NUTRITION IN A POSITIVE WAY

- Avoid negative/fear-based statements like "X food is not healthy." Different families define "healthy food" differently, and different children have different health needs.
- Never confiscate food from a child because you believe it is unhealthy (barring allergies). Children need to trust that their parents can feed them properly. If you take a food away from a child, you are undermining the parent in the eyes of the child. Speak to the parent without the child's knowledge.

PROVIDE STRUCTURE AROUND MEALS & SNACK TIMES

- Have set meal and snack times.
- Avoid grazing.

DON'T TALK ABOUT DIETING IN FRONT OF CHILDREN

- The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages any form of diet talk with all children.
- Encourage body positivity & body diversity. (It is normal for people to come in all shapes and sizes!)
- Encourage exercise for the sake of health and pleasure - not weight control.
- Older grades - do not use dieting as an example of self-control or morality.

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Sources: www.ellynsatterinstitute.org and thefeedingdoctor.com

