

To whom this may concern:

My name is _____ and I am _____.

Recently, it came to my attention that _____

Although well meaning, it is concerning to me that teachers are telling children how to eat. Most children are born with the ability to self regulate their intake. When adults interfere or make diet based comments, we begin to interfere with their abilities to trust and listen to their bodies.

In our home, we do not moralize foods or label them as “good” or “bad.” We allow individuals to listen to their bodies and decide what order they will eat their food and how much they eat. If we, as adults, micromanage children’s food intake, we send messages that their bodies can’t be trusted.

How we feed our children is foundational. Keeping diet messages out of feeding children is protective against eating disorders, as dieting is a major risk factor of eating disorders. How we talk about food and bodies in school can have an impact on how our children view their bodies and how they approach food throughout their lifetime.

Eating disorders have the second highest mortality rate of any mental illness, with one person dying every 52-minutes.¹ **At some hospitals, medical admissions for eating disorders for adolescents have doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic.**² In addition to that frightening statistic, this is also the reality our children live in:

- 81% of ten year olds are afraid of being fat.³
- 35% of 5 year old girls are already on a diet.⁴
- Awareness of dieting as strategies for weight loss emerges as young as 3-years-old, and significantly increases from 3- to 5-years-old.⁵

I would like to make you aware of several resources that may be helpful in bringing information about body inclusivity to our school.

The National Alliance for Eating Disorders (The Alliance) is the leading national eating disorder nonprofit organization providing education, referrals and support for all eating disorders. Sunny Side Up Nutrition is a free resource and podcast for parents and educators about developmentally appropriate nutrition education, family feeding and raising children to be competent eaters.

The Alliance and Sunny Side Up Nutrition would be wonderful allies in building a body positive culture and curriculum for our school that would support students' physical and mental growth. Both organizations are also available to present training to your staff and faculty, as well as referral and support services.

I look forward to the school year and I'd love the opportunity to speak to you more about this. Thank you!

Warmly,

1 Deloitte Access Economics. The Social and Economic Cost of Eating Disorders in the United States of America: A Report for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders and the Academy for Eating Disorders. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/report-economic-costs-of-eating-disorders/>.

2 Otto AK, Jary JM, Sturza J, et al. Medical Admissions Among Adolescents With Eating Disorders During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Pediatrics*. 2021;148(4):e2021052201. doi:10.1542/peds.2021-052201

3 Collins, M.E. Body figure perceptions and preferences among pre-adolescent children. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 1991 March; 10(2):199-208.

4 Damiano SR, et al. Dietary restraint of 5-year-old girls: Associations with internalization of the thin ideal and maternal, media, and peer influences: 5-YEAR-OLD GIRLS' DIETARY RESTRAINT. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2015;48(8):1166-1169. doi:10.1002/eat.22432

5 Rodgers RF, et al. "Stop eating lollies and do lots of sports": a prospective qualitative study of the development of children's awareness of dietary restraint and exercise to lose weight. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act*. 2015;12(1):155. doi:10.1186/s12966-015-0318-x

Resources



National Alliance for Eating Disorders

www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com

www.findEDHelp.com



www.sunnysideupnutrition.com

www.sunnysideupnutrition.com/podcast