

# Healthy Eating

# Nutrition Education

Healthy eating habits and nutrition education were a large focal point of this grant. NFSMI's **Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids** emphasized the State's recommendation to implement family-style dining, and its correlation with healthy eating habits in young children. Family-style meals include food offered in serving bowls and platters, and beverages served in small pitchers on the table. Children choose how much food to serve themselves, and if needed, they have help from an adult with passing bowls of food to one another, or pouring beverages.



According to NFSMI, children benefit from **family-style dining** in the following ways:

### Family-style meals reinforce social skills

- Taking turns
- Passing food to others
- Saying please and thank you
- Helping to set the table for their friends

### Children practice serving skills

- Children practice fine and gross motor skills to serve and pass food.
- Children learn appropriate mealtime behaviors like serving without touching food.
- Children learn not to eat out of the serving dishes or off serving utensils.

### Children feel in control of their eating

- Children may take small servings of food and additional food later in the meal.
- Children may choose not to take a food initially, but change their minds as the meal proceeds.
- Children feel confident that additional food will be available throughout the meal.
- Children take approximately the amounts of foods they'll eat, decreasing the amount of waste.

### Indirectly encourages them to try new things

- Children who feel in control of their eating are more likely to try new things.

Because young children do not have fixed eating habits, the childcare setting is a good place for them to develop specific ideas about what foods they want, and when they want them. To maximize children's benefit of this domestic setting, family-style dining not only emphasizes the planning and preparation aspects of healthy meals, but also establishes healthy eating schedules. It is important



for adults to recognize these food behaviors and guide children to explore new foods in an environment that also strengthens social development. Family-style dining is the perfect opportunity for adults to model healthy eating habits and encourage different food choices.

Studies suggest that changes to the classroom and social environment can increase the number of fruits and vegetables, whole-grain products, fat-free or low-fat milk, lean meat and meat alternatives a child consumes. For example, a change in the social environment such as a simple verbal prompt appears to have significant impact on the likelihood that children will take, and subsequently consume, a fruit serving as part of their school lunch.<sup>1</sup>

NFSMI's **More Than Mud Pies** provides nutrition education activities that help children understand five basic concepts about healthy choices:

- 1) Eat a variety of foods for good health.
- 2) Foods can be identified by group, source, part of the plant, where grown, where purchased, or nutritional content.
- 3) Foods can be described by color.
- 4) Foods can be described by size, smell, texture, temperature, taste, and form.



- 5) Lots of physical activity, outdoor play, nutritious food, and water help children have strong, healthy bones.

Children who have learned about making wise food choices are able to apply that knowledge in their daily meal settings where they are able to choose their own foods.

Nutrition education not only promotes these wise food choices among youth, but it also provides valuable learning skills that will carry over into adulthood. *More Than Mud Pies* outlines a variety of nutrition education activities that are simple, fun, successful, and affordable in a diverse setting of child care facilities. Each activity has book titles to encourage reading.

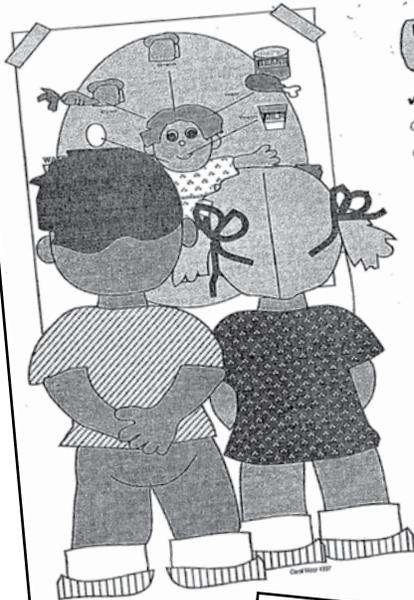


1 Schwartz MB. The influence of a verbal prompt on school lunch fruit consumption: a pilot study. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity 2007, 4:6:10. <http://www.ijbnpa.org/content/4/1/6>.



## My Body

**Opportunities for Learning** Children will match a particular food with the part of the body that the food helps.



### Make Self-Image Collage

**Things You'll Need** ✓glue  
 ✓crayons ✓colored  
 yarn ✓food pictures  
 ✓large piece of butcher paper  
 or brown wrapping paper for  
 each child ✓scissors



**Things You'll Do** ✓Child or  
 teacher traces the body  
 of someone else onto the  
 paper. ✓Color in the traced  
 outlines. ✓Glue pictures of food  
 next to parts of the body the  
 food helps (i.e., milk next to  
 teeth, broccoli next to eyes and  
 skin.) ✓Connect each food to  
 the body with colored yarn. ✓  
 While working on the project,  
 discuss different foods and how  
 they help the body. Use "A  
 Family Guide to Nutrients" to  
 help with the discussion. ✓Hang  
 completed collages in classroom.

### Books to Read

My First Body Book  
 by Christopher Rice  
 and Melanie Rice



Me and My Amazing Body  
 by Joan Sweeney



### Songs to Sing

"Head, Shoulders,  
 Knees, and Toes"



### What Families Can Do

Send "A Family Guide to  
 Nutrients" home with the  
 children and tell families that  
 the children are learning how  
 foods help the body stay  
 healthy.

## Play Dough Food Centerpieces



### Things You'll Need

✓waxed paper ✓large  
 bowl ✓liquid measuring  
 cups ✓dry measuring  
 cups ✓measuring spoons  
 ✓mixing spoon

### INGREDIENTS for Play Dough

1 cup salt  
 1/2 cup water  
 1 1/2 cups flour  
 2 Tbsp oil  
 Food coloring



**Things You'll Do** ✓Make  
 play dough, mixing all  
 ingredients except food  
 coloring. ✓Give each child  
 enough play dough to shape  
 into a favorite food. Add a few  
 drops of food coloring to the  
 dough. Have children work on a  
 piece of waxed paper, mixing in  
 the color and shaping their  
 play dough food. ✓Tape the  
 children's names to their  
 "foods" and display in a bowl as  
 a centerpiece.



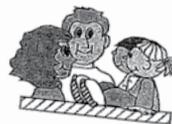
### Books to Read

Eating the  
 Alphabet: Fruits  
 and Vegetables  
 from A to Z  
 by Lois Ehlert



### Songs to Sing

"Peas Porridge Hot"



### What Families Can Do

Tell families you are teaching  
 the children about new foods.  
 Encourage families to serve a  
 variety of foods at home  
 including new foods and old  
 favorites. Send "A Family  
 Guide to Mealtimes With  
 Children" home to the family

## Make Baked Apple



**Things You'll Need** ✓ Plastic serrated knife/apple corer ✓ small oven-proof pan ✓ measuring spoons ✓ spoon for basting ✓ cutting board

**INGREDIENTS** for each child

1 apple  
1/2 tsp brown sugar  
1/8 tsp cinnamon  
Pinch of nutmeg



**Things You'll Do** ✓ Wash apple. ✓ Cut (slice) off bottom of apple so it rests flat on cut surface. ✓ Remove core with apple corer and teacher's assistance. ✓ Place apple in pan. ✓ Fill center with brown sugar. ✓ Sprinkle with cinnamon and nutmeg. ✓ Add 1 Tbsp of water to the pan. ✓ Bake in 350 °F oven about 40 minutes until the apple is tender. ✓ Taste juices over apple while cooking. (Teacher's task.)

✓ **Talk about:** What cooking does to the apple, which ingredient sweetens the taste, where nutmeg and cinnamon come from (nutmeg is a seed in the fruit which grows on the calabash tree found in Africa; cinnamon is bark from the cinnamon tree found in India), which food group apples belong to (fruit group), which vitamin the apple supplies (vitamin C, which helps prevent illnesses and promotes the healing of wounds).

## More About Apples

**Things You'll Do** ✓ Discuss where apples come from. ✓ Visit an apple orchard. If you are unable to visit an orchard, find a picture of an apple tree or draw one. ✓ Apple trees come from seeds. Cut an apple and count the seeds. ✓ Ask: "How many apple trees could we start from the seeds of this one apple?" ✓ Talk about different foods made from apples: apple juice, cider, canned sliced apples, and applesauce.



## Apple Poem Things You'll Need Poem, "Away Up High"

### AWAY UP HIGH

Away up high in an apple tree;  
(Point up.)  
Two red apples smile at me.  
(Form two circles with fingers.)  
I shook the tree as hard as I  
could. (Pretend to shake tree.)  
Down came those apples;  
And m-m-m they were good!  
(Rub tummy.)

From Folk Songs USA by  
John Lomax and Alan Lomax



**Things You'll Do** ✓ Teach children the poem about apples.



**Books to Read**  
Ten Apples Up On Top  
by Dr. Seuss



**Songs to Sing**  
"Apples and  
Bananas"

## Peter Rabbit Tasting Party



**Things You'll Need** ✓ assortment of raw fresh vegetables and fruits ✓ large head of cabbage ✓ dips ✓ trays ✓ plastic serrated edge knives ✓ The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter



**Things You'll Do** ✓ Help the children prepare the vegetables and fruits for tasting. ✓ Cut a flat surface on the bottom of the cabbage and scoop out the inside to create a bowl for the dip (teacher's task). ✓ Decorate the front of the cabbage to look like a rabbit with small pieces of vegetables or fruits. Be sure to give Peter some whiskers and floppy ears. ✓ Read The Tale of Peter Rabbit and talk about the importance of vegetables and fruits. If someone has a rabbit costume, this is a fun way to have Peter tell his own story to the children.

