

# HEALTHY EATING AT SCHOOL

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

## *What School Personnel and Parents Need to Know*

### TRUST CHILDREN TO KNOW HOW MUCH THEY NEED TO EAT

- Let children eat as much as they are hungry for. Don't try to get them to eat more, or less, or even *taste*.
- Don't make children finish one food before they eat another.
- Believe children when they say or show that they are full.

### TEACH *FOOD*, NOT NUTRITION

- Let children learn about food by looking and touching. Let them taste if they wish.
- Until high school, don't teach nutrition. Young children can't understand.
- Children are frightened by talk about good-food-bad-food. Don't say, or show in any way, that a food isn't healthy or good for you.
- Never take away food from a child's packed lunch or snack.\* It is worse for children to doubt their parents than it is for them to eat the "wrong" food.

\*See the ESI handout, *Packing a good-tasting and filling school lunch*.

### PROVIDE STRUCTURE AROUND MEALS and SNACK TIMES

- Have set meal and sit-down snack times.
- Have parties at sit-down snack times.
- Don't let children eat and drink at other times (except for water).

### LET CHILDREN FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEIR BODIES

- The American Academy of Pediatrics says talk about weight or dieting is bad for children of all ages.
- Teach that people come in all sizes. Don't criticize or even *talk* about anybody's size and shape—even your own!
- Children like to move. At recess and in gym class, let them enjoy moving and learn skills for a lifetime of activity.
- Don't give children the idea that they should change their body—for any reason.

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