

Keep mealtimes enjoyable

Mealtimes are not just about eating. They are also a chance to connect, build social skills, learn manners and try new food.

Creating a positive, relaxed and social mealtime can help to make eating a positive experience.

You don't need to talk about food, but if you do:

- Call food by its name rather than giving it a label such as good, bad, healthy or unhealthy
- Talk about the food rather than nutrition. For example, focus on the sensory qualities of the food (crunchy, sweet, chewy...)
- Help students get curious about what's on their plate.

Instead of:

"We have healthy pumpkin soup for lunch today"

"Broccoli has lots of vitamins and minerals"

"Eat up your carrots they will help you see better"

"Apples are so good for you!"

Try:

"We have pumpkin soup for lunch today "

"How do you think broccoli grows?"

"These carrots are so crunchy and sweet"

"I love apples. What's your favourite fruit?"

At mealtimes:

- Focus on maintaining a positive, relaxed and social environment.
- If you want to talk about food, encourage students to get curious about what's on their plate (such as by focusing on the sensory qualities of the food).
- Discourage negative comments between students about what is or isn't being eaten.

If you can, sit and eat alongside students. Role modelling can increase food acceptance and is more powerful than anything you say.

For more information

www.schoolfoodmatters.org.au/professional-learning-resources/professional-learning/topic-2-keeping-mealtimes-enjoyable/

