

Let's Talk About Food



How to Start the Conversation

Approaching conversations with students around all foods with respect and curiosity can help create an inclusive eating environment in your classroom.



IF A STUDENT...	RATHER THAN...	CONSIDER...
Brings a juice box for snack	Labelling the food as “unhealthy,” “sometimes food,” or “junk food”	<p>Not commenting with a value judgement about the food. Speaking about all foods in an inclusive way can promote a respectful and positive food environment in your classroom.</p> <p><i>“I see you brought juice in your snack today. Is apple your favourite flavour? Do you need help unwrapping your straw?”</i></p>
Comments that a certain food being discussed or explored is “bad” for you	Categorizing foods in a lesson as “good” or “bad”	<p>Continuing to provide opportunities to learn about and prepare many different foods at school.</p> <p><i>“What makes you say that? Sometimes we eat foods because we enjoy how they taste. Our bodies need lots of different foods to grow, think, and play. Let’s continue our food exploration activity...”</i></p>
Mentions they avoid certain foods because of calories, sugar, fat, or salt	Focusing on calories or specific nutrients when talking about the food	<p>Discussing the benefits of eating different foods every day and how all types of food nourish the body.</p> <p><i>“What’s interesting is that different foods can serve different purposes. Eating different foods each day helps our bodies get what they need to move, grow, and think and makes eating enjoyable.”</i></p>

Let's Talk About Food



IF A STUDENT...	RATHER THAN...	CONSIDER...
Indicates they are tracking the food they eat	Praising or passing judgement on the behaviour	<p>Remaining curious and allowing the student to share what is motivating the behaviour. This will help foster a sense of safety and trust between you and the student.¹</p> <p><i>“Tell me more about why you are choosing to track your food choices. I am curious to know how tracking your food makes you feel.”²</i></p>
Asks, “What is healthy eating?”	Talking about health as the result of personal choices (e.g., eat less, move more)	<p>Being mindful that health is influenced by a variety of social factors, including income, education, and access to health care. Many factors that influence health may be out of one’s control.</p> <p><i>“Eating to support health may look different for different people, depending on what your body needs and what is available.”</i></p>
Tells you about a dietary preference or restriction they follow	Discussing or imposing personal views about food and eating patterns (e.g., vegan, organic, weight loss diets)	<p>Recognizing that eating is deeply personal and looks different from person to person. Discussing multiple viewpoints and allowing others to make decisions that align with their values, needs, and resources is a way to treat students with dignity and respect.</p> <p><i>“Thanks for telling me about your choice to avoid (X food). With so many different approaches to eating, it is important to remember not everyone eats the same, and that’s okay.”</i></p>



¹If you are concerned about a student’s behaviours or comments around food or eating, consider connecting the student with additional support.

²The use of food trackers has been linked to development of, or exacerbation of, disordered eating and other negative impacts on our relationship with food. Simpson et al. Calorie counting and fitness tracking technology: associations with eating disorder symptomatology. *Eating Behaviors* 2017;26:89-92.