

With a little planning, mealtime in the classroom can provide an opportunity to build relationships with your students and support whole-child wellness. Here are 5 tips for a positive mealtime experience.

Safety first

- Everyone should wash their hands before and after eating.
- Explain that kids cannot share food because we need to fight germs.
- Communicate classroom allergies to families and ensure rules like no-nut policies are followed.

Set expectations

- Set aside time during the first week to help children practice and learn expected mealtime manners and cleanup procedures.
- Expect a few spills and messes. Have materials, like paper towels, ready and have kids help clean up their own mess.

Build social-emotional skills

Use the time to bond with your students. Ask:

What was the most fun part of your morning?

What are you looking forward to doing later today?

How are you feeling today?

If you could be a (superhero, animal, professional athlete, etc.) what would you be? Why?

Be a healthy role model

- ✓ Eat smart foods in front of kids, including veggies and fruits. Leave the planning, packing and cleaning to someone else, and order breakfast and lunch from the school cafeteria.
- ✓ Stay hydrated. Water is the best way to hydrate, so make sure you and the students have personal water bottles and refill them throughout the day.

Create a positive mealtime environment

- Have screen-free meals and snacks, and instead focus on pleasant conversation or play music at a low volume.
- Avoid silent lunches. This might be one of the only opportunities the children have to be social with their friends during the school day.
- Don't focus on what or how much the kids are eating. A gentle reminder to eat their food is OK, but don't push them to finish it all, or try something they don't want to try.



Enjoy your meal or snack outside! If weather permits, use small towels or blankets, poly spots, or other items to help kids maintain social distance guidelines.