

# Nurturing Healthy Eaters in Secondary Schools



## Parents & Caregivers

have a variety of food available to pack.

## School

decides when and where students eat.

## Students

pack a variety of food and decide how much to eat.

## Provide a Positive Eating Environment

- Provide eating environments around the school that encourage students to eat together and use mealtimes as a time to connect.
- Have casual conversation with students. Save nutrition education for the classroom instead of at mealtimes (for example, when eating together in a family studies class).
- Encourage students to limit screen time to be mindful of their eating habits.

## Respect Natural Hunger & Fullness Cues

- Allow students to control their own intake and avoid pressuring students to eat a particular food.
- Avoid talking about dieting, restricting food intake or specifying portion sizes.
- Remind students that they are still growing and that they need to eat enough to support their activity and growth.
- Trust and respect students when they say or signal they are full or still hungry.

## Build Trust with Students & Families

- Respect that many factors influence what foods students eat and that students have different health needs.
- Avoid commenting or making judgements about students' food choices.
- Refer families to appropriate community resources and reliable nutrition information such as Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000), [Unlockfood.ca](http://Unlockfood.ca) and [Canada.ca/FoodGuide](http://Canada.ca/FoodGuide).

**Healthy eating is more than the food you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat.**

*Canada's Food Guide*

The information in this article is based on Ellyn Satter's principles and guidelines ([www.ellynsatterinstitute.org](http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org)).

Adapted with permission from the Manitoba School Nutrition Action Group

## Teach Nutrition in a Positive Way

- Focus on the benefits of fuelling the mind and body with a variety of food.
- Keep all messages positive. Avoid negative/fear-based statements like "that food is not healthy."
- Remind students that healthy eating is an overall pattern over time; no one food or meal defines our eating habits.
- Create practical opportunities to learn about, see, smell, touch, grow, cook, and try a variety of food.
- Focus on behaviours such as regular meals and snacks, sleep, and physical activity to feel good, not for weight control or appearance.
- Avoid weighing students, using weight tables or charts, or calorie counting activities.
- When using food in classroom lessons or school activities, choose foods from Canada's Food Guide.
- Avoid using any food as a reward.

## Promote Positive Body Image

- Be mindful of what you say and avoid sharing personal views about food, dieting and body weight.
- Teach about natural body diversity. Each person's body is different, and we should respect, accept and celebrate these differences!
- Teach students how to look at media messages and stereotypes critically. There is no 'ideal' body and all bodies are worthy.

Eating Should Be Enjoyable

