

Building Blocks
Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, and Oral Health
A Lesson Plan Module for Teachers
Junior Kindergarten – Grade 6

Healthy Eating
Grade 6
Lesson 2

Lesson 2 – What Does Food Mean to You?

Curriculum Expectations:

Students will analyse personal eating habits in a variety of situations (e.g., at home, in school, in restaurants).

Objectives:

Students will learn about what food means to them.

Suggested Outline

Section 1: Introduce Today’s Lesson

Section 2: Discussion/Background Information

Section 3: Activity and Class Discussion

Section 4: Conclusion

Section 1: Introduce Today’s Lesson

Today we will learn about what food means to us by completing a “What Does Food Mean to You” activity sheet.

Section 2: Discussion/Background Information

Volunteers and Professionals Who Work with Children

People children look up to (e.g., coach, teacher, camp leader, and group leader) can have a powerful effect on children through the example they set. Their unspoken example, such as munching on fruit for a snack or comments about their own weight, can strongly support what children understand about healthy eating, body image, and healthy living.

Family Influences and Traditions

Parents are children’s most important source of information and influence about food and eating. Family eating habits, activity patterns and attitudes toward food and eating have an enormous influence on children. For example, if the family eats breakfast, it is likely the children will too. Family income is another factor that influences what children eat and the food choices that are available to them. Families develop patterns of eating based on what they eat, when, and where, to accommodate their schedules, family size, and activity levels of different members. Families may eat one or more meals a week in restaurants or from take-out establishments. They may use a large proportion of already prepared foods.

Culture

The Canadian population consists of many diverse ethnic groups. This is exciting because



it provides the opportunity to choose from a large variety of foods in addition to the traditional Canadian cuisine. Children can begin to learn about the differences in people's eating habits, likes, dislikes, and cultural backgrounds. They can learn that people from different parts of the world can choose different, but equally healthy foods (e.g., bread, rice, tortillas, roti). Discussion about food in the classroom should enable each child to feel individually involved by including foods that relate to their own food habits.

When discussing the food practices of multicultural groups, understanding value systems of the cultural groups is required. Food habits are greatly influenced by the group's values. The perception of healthy foods differs from one cultural group to another. It is important that you do not make the students feel that one value system and food practice is superior to another. When there is discussion around cultural foods, keep the following in mind:

- do not assume that students from a particular group have adopted the food and dietary practices of their new country. Ask students to share with the class their food practices and current eating patterns of their family.
- children sharing food experiences can help establish trust, as well as knowledge, among classmates. Ask questions with an open mind – don't be judgmental.

Individual Preferences

Individuals develop eating habits based partly on culture and family but also on personal likes, dislikes and idiosyncrasies. Some foods become associated with good times, and eating them makes us feel good (e.g., cake, corn on the cob, candy). Sometimes we eat simply out of habit or because we are bored: when a certain television program comes on, out comes the popcorn or the bag of chocolate chip cookies. The main reason children give for choosing a favourite food is almost always taste. Children choose foods because they taste good and because eating those foods makes them feel good.

Section 3: Activity

Instruct students to complete the activity sheet “*What Does Food Mean to You?*”. Next to each trigger word, students list the food that first comes to their mind. Reassure students that most words from their cultural background can be spelled in English letters by sounding it out. Collect the completed activity sheets and read some of the response aloud (anonymously).

Class Discussion

Generate a class discussion (i.e., based on the responses, that food has different meanings for different people)

Section 4: Conclusion

Food has different meanings for different people, which makes each person unique and adds variety to life.

Today we learned about what food means to us by completing a “*What Does Food Mean to You?*” activity sheet.

