

CREATING HEALTHY EATING  
& ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

**CHEERS**  
FOR CHILD CARE



## Mealtime Conversations



# Mealtime Conversations

It is noon and the children in the 4-year-old room are invited to come for lunch. They choose from three tables to sit at and enjoy a family-style meal. Parker welcomes each of his table partners as they sit down. He engages in a lively conversation and notices that Quinn wants to share about her morning - "wait, it's Quinn's turn to talk". Quinn adds to the conversation to share a story about her dog - "My dog is Angus and he's nice!"



Zaden, Anwyn, Owen and Rylee notice the colors of the food, "that's white" – as they describe the milk comparing how it is different to the cucumbers on the table. This leads to more comparisons of the colors they are eating. This leads to a discussion of colors in their clothing, and then their shoe colors. "My shoes are green but not the same as the cucumber!" "I like black sometimes, but not usually!"



Conversations at the table include consideration of whether they want more food, and which of the food choices (chili, tacos, milk) are their favourite. They then begin to consider how this connects to the foods they eat at home. Anwyn notices what is the same and what is different, "My mom makes chili, but we don't eat taco chips with chili!" Owen adds, "We don't have tacos at my house!" Rylee shares "I like tacos with cheese!"



The children enthusiastically share about themselves and listen to the stories of others. They notice the characteristics of the food and make connections to their own home environment.





# Mealtime Conversations

*Why are these mealtime conversations important?*



## Diversity & Difference

The children are creating close relationships through the mealtime conversations. They are thinking and finding out about each other. They share their knowledge and comparison of the colors of the food to everyday personal objects. They reveal information to each other about the lives they have with their families, making connections to each other, other children, and their families. They are demonstrating an appreciation of diversity and respecting differences.

## Social Relationships

During these lunchtime conversations, children are mastering social skills in a meaningful way. They are learning about turn-taking as part of important conversations. They take time to stop eating to talk with each other. They are engaging in pleasant experiences with the food for sustenance but also for the social relationships that are building as they eat the food.



## Mealtime Skills

The children are mastering utensil skills and enjoying the sensory aspect of eating. The lunchtime environment is relaxed without a rush to move on to the next activity. This creates a positive sense of wellbeing and positive attitudes about food.

*These mealtime conversations demonstrate the pleasure that children can have while making healthy food choices.*



### Well-Being

#### Belonging

Children build respectful and responsive relationships:

- Developing cherished as well as casual friendships

*As the children engage in mealtime conversations they are making connections between the child care centre community and their own lives. They are co-constructing their own identities with other children in the child care community to which they belong. They display self confidence as they share their ideas and build respectful relationships with others. They are curious about others in relation to their own identities.*

#### Physical Health

Children learn about food and nutrition:

- Exploring a range of cultural practices of eating and sharing food
- Making decisions about food consumption, preparation, serving, and clean-up routines

*They are mastering utensil skills and enjoying the sensory aspect of eating. The lunchtime environment was relaxed without a rush to move to something else. This creates a positive sense of well-being and positive attitudes about food.*

<sup>1</sup> Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework. Retrieved from [flightframework.ca](http://flightframework.ca).





The educators have provided a responsive environment that supports children with the time and space to engage in developing relationships. Children seem comfortable with the mealtime routine that has developed. **Think about** how educators might be intentional about encouraging the relationships between these children? **Think about** how the mealtime routine in your child care program supports connection to adults? How might educators build on interests of the children based on the comments and conversations during this observation? **Think about** the learning children demonstrated discussing the differences in food preferences and family practices. What do these children know about diversity? What do they know about healthy food choices and healthy eating? What else could educators do to plan a responsive environment to learn more about healthy food choices and healthy eating?



*The Curriculum Learning Stories: Mealtime Conversations could not be done without the collaboration and cooperation of Mount Royal University child care centre. CHEERS for Child Care extends a sincere thank you for allowing us to share this important story about Mealtime Conversations.*



# Copyright and Terms of Use

## Copyright © 2019

Curriculum Learning Stories: Mealtime Conversations by Lafave, L., is licensed under a Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International license. Based on the work found at [www.cheerskids.ca](http://www.cheerskids.ca)

You are permitted to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format under the following terms:

**Attribution** - You must give appropriate credit.

Credit must include:

- Name of authors
- Title of work
- URL of source

The following is an example for an APA-style reference:

Farebrother, M. & Lafave, L. (2019). *Curriculum Learning Stories: Mealtime Conversations*. Retrieved from [cheerskids.ca](http://cheerskids.ca).

