



Brain Food

Supporting Social Emotional Development at Meals and Snacks

pg 1

In an effort to encourage healthy eating habits for your children as well as support your childcare business, we have put together this self-study unit. This unit meets your annual nutrition education requirement for CACFP and may also be considered as continuing education requirement for your Colorado State License “ **Health, Safety, and Nutrition, or Social/Emotional**”.

Please read and complete the activities carefully and consider that the workshop should take at least one hour of effort on your part. Once reviewed, you will receive a training certificate for **1 credit hour** via email along with helpful feedback.

Provider Printed Name

Provider Signature

Date

Submit all pages completed (1-6) with your menus or to: southwestcacfp@gmail.com

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So, what is “Social-Emotional” development and how may it be applied to meal and snack times? The term “social-emotional” development is a broad definition of how children learn coping skills. Providers who have experienced thrown food, spitting, spills, or even jut kids who can’t sit still, recognize how important these skills can be! The goal we all hope for is that children will learn to behave appropriately, make good choices, and enjoy meals and snacks as a social event. Consider these ‘keys” to the learning process.

- 🔑 **Self-awareness – what am I thinking and how am I feeling?**
- 🔑 **Social-awareness- how am I *expected* to react to this situation?**
- 🔑 **Self-management- Recognizing that I can control my reactions**
- 🔑 **Positive decision making – will my reactions end in a good or bad experience?**

The provider’s role is not only to help a child through these processes in the moment, but to set an environment that prevents unnecessary problems and allows children to learn from experiences. Here’s just some of what happens at nearly every meal or snack!



Taking turns, waiting, sharing, personal space recognition, talking with peers, consequences, likes vs dislikes, the opinions of others may be different, verbalizing need, manners, forming healthy habits, serving, pouring, cleaning...

YOU have a unique opportunity to influence multiple skills for multiple children, multiple times a day just by feeding them and that is **POWERFUL!**



Imagine you are a 3-year-old and your friend at the lunch table has just taken your favorite cup from you. Using the KEYS above, fill in the following:

What am I thinking/feeling? _____

How am I expected to react? _____

What could I do to control my reaction? _____

What might happen if I react in a negative way? _____

What might happen if I react in a positive way? _____

- A. Yell from the kitchen at the child who took the cup to demand he/she apologize and give it back
- B. Approach the child whose cup was taken and ask him/her to express what they are feeling and then engage both children in the conversation
- C. Excuse the child who took the cup from the table to think about their actions and then have a discussion about it later

Imagine you are a 3-year-old on your first day and a food you don't recognize is served.

What feelings might you experience?

Now you are the caregiver. *What might you see that tells you how this child is feeling?*

What questions could you ask this child to help them figure out what to do next?

List at least three POSITIVE things you could do to encourage the child to try the new food?

MAKE IT BETTER – read the statements and write in a “better” message

Stop that!

I'm not going to be happy if I have to throw out the food you didn't eat

Sit down and no talking at the table!

If you eat the green beans you can have a piece of candy

5 Ideal Practice

- Children have access to an area to wash their own hands
- Children may serve or pour for themselves at least some of the time
- Spills are anticipated and children have access to tools for cleaning up
- Adults actively engage children in conversations and guide them with words to identify their thoughts/feelings
- Adults routinely sit with children and/or model appropriate behaviors
- Adults extend learning about foods, wellness, or behavior related to the meal or snack with books/stories, activities, or role play
- Served foods generally exceed CACFP minimum requirements

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Meets all Minimal Practices and Effective Practices, and at least half of the practices from Ideal Practice.

I rate myself right now as a level:

1 2 3 4 5

3 Effective Practice

- Mealtime has few distractions such as background noise, clutter on the table, adults getting up and down from the table, traffic in the room, uncleaned spills, and adults talking over children's heads.
- Children wash every time
- Furniture is spaced so that children can sit, rise, and walk around the table without interfering with others at the table.
- Foods include a variety of vegetables and fruits with little sugar
- Adults actively watch for times to teach appropriate social behaviors and address conflicts before they escalate

2

Meets all Minimal Practices, and at least half of the practices from Effective Practice.

1 Minimal Practice

- Adequate space for each child to sit without squeezing
- Adequate space for adults to serve and assist
- Prep and serving areas are free of debris and sanitary

CACFP creditable foods are offered in adequate portions





Real Life Application

Observe a breakfast or lunch in your home and document the following:

_____ children participated and their ages were _____ mos / yrs - _____ mos / yrs
How many

We're all children gathered at the table together? YES / NO if no, what happened

Did everyone have adequate room to sit comfortably? YES / NO If no, what could you reasonably change? _____

Was the food served appealing to the children? Yes / No How did you know? _____

Were all components offered to all children at the same time? Yes / No
Why would this be an important practice?

Were there any undesirable behaviors during the meal? Yes / No if yes, describe: _____

Were there any positive interactions that you observed? Yes / No If yes, describe. If no, why do you think that happened? _____

Are there any changes, enhancements, or new ideas that you plan to implement as a result of observing your children today? If yes, please share. If no, tell us why not

Were children permitted to have any involvement in deciding the foods served today? Yes / No If yes, please share. If no, tell us why. _____

One More Self-Assessment to Keep You Moving Forward pg 6

Mealtime takes place at a regularly scheduled time and as part of children's daily routine

<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready to get started
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Adults caring for children (e.g., teachers, assistants, etc.) have been trained and model appropriate mealtime behavior

<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready to get started
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Adults caring for children turn off all visible screens, including televisions, tablets, phones, etc. during mealtime and engage in conversation with the children

<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready to get started
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Adults caring for children sit with children at the table during mealtime

<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready to get started
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Adults caring for children discuss if children's stomachs feel full before serving a second helping of food

<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready to get started
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During mealtime, adults caring for children encourage children to try new or less preferred foods

<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready to get started
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A transition activity (e.g., reading a book, coloring activity, listening to quiet music, etc.) is offered to children when they're done with their meal

<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready to get started
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