Open Letter to Educators

THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVED FOOD EDUCATION

Childhood nutrition matters

Children who eat a range of nutritious foods and have a healthy relationship with food:

- Shine
- Have improved mental health
- Have lower risk of eating disorders
- Grow at their own healthy pace
- Create healthy lifelong habits

Food experiences in early learning

All centres have a food culture, intentional or not. This environment can support or challenge a child's eating.

Food experiences in early education include:

- Eating environment at mealtimes
- Food served (special occasions and events)
- Nutrition and food education
- Adult role modelling

Partnership

The seemingly simple task of "eating" is an important partnership. Collaboration and respect creates an effective, healthy food culture for children to learn to like a variety of healthy food. What's your responsibility?

Food
Selecting items for the lunchbox/menu

Environment
When and where to eat

Eating
If, how much and in what order

How can we best educate our children?

Current evidence highlights the need to review how we educate children about food

TRADITIONAL

Nutrition education

Classifying food: healthy, unhealthy, junk, good, bad, everyday, sometimes, red/orange/green foods (and synonyms for these words)

Expect dietary habits to change immediately

Pressuring children to eat (i.e. one more bite)

Judging families food choices

Commenting on what a child is eating

Talking about diets and weight

Short term healthy eating. Poor long term success, many negative side-effects

EMPOWERING

Food education

Neutral exposures to food. Learning where food comes from, how it grows, sensory engagement, properties of food - colour, size shape, texture

Understand learning to eat takes time and children do it at their own pace

Creating a pleasant, pressure free eating environment

Offering parents tips and recipes

Gardening and cooking

Role modelling enjoying fruits and veggies

Healthier eating for life

Free resources!
Guide to Creating Positive Mealtimes

Let's create a positive food environment so our children can shine in early childhood education and have positive health outcomes for life!

Created by **www.foost.com.au** in association with **www.thecuriousnutritionist.com.au**