

Healthy School Lunches the Montessori Way

The Montessori Method Teaches About Healthy Eating and the Environment

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Have a conversation with any parent of a young child and the topic of healthy eating will invariably arise. Most people know that it is important to provide a healthy school lunch to a child, however, sorting through all of the choices and incorporating it into a family lifestyle can be daunting.

Children in a Montessori school help to plant and harvest vegetable gardens, compost and recycle and become aware that consumption is part of a larger environment that needs to be taken care of and respected. By incorporating the Montessori philosophies of respect of nature and sense of community, a healthy school lunch can evolve from a new approach to healthy eating.

Waste Free Lunches - At many schools, children who stay for an extended or full day program bring their own lunch to school. Time crunched parents often rely on single-serving disposable packaging to make lunch assembly quick and easy. According to research conducted between 1999-2008 by the [California Integrated Waste Management Board](#), "It has been estimated that on average a school-age child using a disposable lunch generates 67 pounds of waste per school year."

Eating Local Foods - The most healthful food is food that is grown locally. It is fresher, tastes better and is more nutritious. Most Montessori schools have a school garden where the children plant, tend to and harvest year round, however, not every environment has the space to have a garden. Go on trips with your children to local markets and farms to create a connection with the local community and provide the concept that food does not just appear at the grocery store. Buying local is also good for the local economy; it supports independent businesses and farmers in the community.

Lifelong Healthy Eating Habits - Providing a healthy school lunch is a lesson that can combine the Montessori ideals of respecting the environment and being a part of a larger community. A young child who is offered healthy foods, routinely uses non-disposable products, sits down to eat and enjoy a meal, and learns the importance of eating in season local foods will grow up with healthy eating habits and a respect for the environment.