Encouraging Student Success During Lunch Time

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Training Agenda

- Why this topic?
- Review of lunch related skills and strategies for learners of all ages
- Review examples of classroom instructional procedures for lunch skills
- Discuss roles for teachers and lunch monitors

Why this topic?

- Lunch can be one of the most difficult times of the day for students, particularly those with special needs
- Lunchtime is an unstructured time of day that presents many social, behavioral, and adaptive skill demands on students
Why this topic?

Lunch can be challenging for a variety of reasons
- Environmental Issues
  - Noise level
  - Crowds
  - Disorganization
  - Time constraints
- Rules and Routines
  - Standing in line
  - Selecting and purchasing food
  - Eating and clean up etiquette
- Social Interactions
  - Talking with peers

Why this topic?

Lunchtime should be a balance between opportunities to relax, socialize, practice good manners, and learn new skills
- For many students, these things will occur naturally
- For others, lunchtime skills need to be specifically taught in order to help the student navigate the lunch environment successfully

Why this topic?

For students with developmental disabilities, lunchtime offers a natural opportunity in the day to practice many skills
- Adaptive skills
- Learning daily routines/independence
- Communication skills
- Social skills
- And many others
Lunch Related Skills and Strategies

• Let’s look at specific skills that can be naturally targeted during lunch times at school, as well as strategies that may be useful in teaching those skills

Adaptive Skills

• Many adaptive skills naturally occur during lunch time activities, which may need to be specifically targeted for some students
  • Self feeding
  • Finger foods
  • Basic use of utensils, regular cup
  • Advanced use of utensils, napkin
  • Teaching strategies
    • Shaping/chaining procedures
    • Adaptive utensils

Adaptive Skills

• Expanding dietary repertoire
  • Introducing small amounts of new foods
  • Increase amounts of nutritious foods toward balanced diet
  • Teaching strategies
    • Shaping procedures, Premack Principle
    • “Take one bite and you can have your cookies”
    • Touching, tasting, chewing, consuming
    • Texture fading procedures
**Lunch Related Skills**

- **Adaptive Skills**
  - Setting the table
  - Gathering necessary items
  - Placing items in correct locations
  - Teaching strategies
    - Visual schedule for routine
    - Visual template for items in place settings
    - Peer/video modeling
    - Specific prompting and reinforcement

**Learning Daily Routines/Independence**
- School lunch requires students to independently get food for themselves
- Many organization, motor, and planning skills are needed to be successful
- Students also need to learn basic routines to navigate the lunch line, select and purchase lunch, as well as clean up procedures

**Let’s look at some strategies that can be used to teach some of common lunchtime routines and behavioral expectations**
Learning Daily Routines/Independence

- Lining up: Teaching Strategies
  - Review student expectations/rule
  - Line up by age, student number, preferences, hot lunch versus bag lunch
  - Practice in classroom, hallway, can use game format
  - Reward students for appropriate behavior while lining up (e.g., extended recess, fun class activity)
  - Encourage students to help each other

- Standing/Waiting in Line: Teaching Strategies
  - Teach rules for appropriate waiting in line
  - Place cues on ground to help students identify where to stand
  - Place interesting posters where students will be expected to wait for extended periods of time
  - Teach strategies of how to pass the time (e.g., conversational games, trivia questions)
  - Reinforce students for waiting appropriately (e.g., tokens, praise)

- Walking through lunch line and getting lunch: Teaching Strategies
  - Use pictures and posters to identify steps in the routine
  - Practice by going through the motions without food
  - Give students cue cards (e.g., on a key ring) to carry with them, as needed, to identify what food to get, what to do next
  - Place cues on ground to help students identify where to stand
  - Practice motor skills needed to carry and balance tray
Lunch Related Skills

Learning Daily Routines/Independence

- Paying for lunch: Teaching Strategies
  - Post prices near each food item
  - Teach students to have money or lunch card available
  - Practice money skills; making and counting out change
  - Teach kids to identify how much money they need, will they have enough?
  - Polite and appropriate money exchange skills with cashier

- Clean Up: Teaching Strategies
  - Use visual reminders for where trash or recycling or other items are placed
  - Use visual schedules to teach clean-up procedures (e.g. where to put items, wiping tables, sweeping)
  - Teach sorting skills for trash versus recycling
  - Assign students to different clean-up chores
  - Assign one or more students to check that all is cleaned up appropriately before dismissal granted

- Dismissal: Teaching Strategies
  - Explain dismissal expectations
  - Remain consistent
  - Encourage observational learning
  - Make students practice skill if error occurs
  - Require group participation
Lunch Related Skills

Social Skills

- Lunch time is one of the primary opportunities for students to socialize with peers, and for students with special needs, this is an important time of day to practice social skills and develop friendships.
- Often times, students require extra support from instructors during these times to have positive and successful interactions with peers.

Let's look at some important social skills that can be naturally targeted at lunch times to improve a student's social success.

Social Skills

- Greetings
  - Reciprocating greetings from adults and peers
  - Initiating greetings
  - Making eye contact while greeting
  - Using names with greetings
  - Using age-appropriate slang within greetings
Lunch Related Skills

Social Skills

Greetings (cont.)
- Teaching Strategies
  - Discuss student expectations
  - Practice and reinforce in classroom/small groups (e.g. game format, tokens/points/stickers)
  - Prompt, reinforce and generalize to lunch settings

Social Skills

Conversations
- Responding to questions and comments
- Initiating conversation
- Maintaining by taking turns
- Staying on topic
- Reading body language and social cues

Social Skills

Conversations (cont.)
- Teaching strategies
  - Social Rules/Role play and rehearsal
  - Conversation starter cards
  - Conversation topic cards
  - Conversation games (e.g. topic towers)
  - Video modeling
Lunch Related Skills

- **Social Skills**
  - **Manners and Etiquette**
    - Eat with mouth closed
    - Eat slowly
    - Wipe face, mouth, and hands regularly during meal
    - Don’t talk with mouth full
    - Say “please” and “thank you” in line
    - Say “excuse me” when walking in front of someone, or you need someone to move

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- **Social Skills**
  - **Manners and Etiquette (cont.)**
    - Teaching Strategies
      - Social rule/Role play and rehearsal
      - Visual signs and cues in natural environment as reminder
      - Have students practice manners at home, ask parents to sign off on manners practiced

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- **Social Skills**
  - **Appropriate social and emotional responding**
    - Inferring other’s desires
    - Finding out what others want
    - Responding appropriately to conflict
    - Appropriate sharing and turn taking
    - Identifying cause and effect
    - Predicting how actions will affect others
Lunch Related Skills

- **Social Skills**
  - Appropriate social and emotional responding

- **Teaching Strategies**
  - Social rule/Role play and rehearsal
  - Discuss student expectations and rules
  - Practice and reinforce in small groups, classroom, and at home
  - Review social stories
  - Visual signs and cues in natural environment as reminder

There are many other skills not mentioned that a student may need to be taught during lunch time. Remember, teachers can teach students these and other skills using:

- Task Analysis
- Modeling
- Posters
- Written Reminders
- Verbal Reminders and Cue

How do we know which skills to target with a learner or group of students?

- Observation of skills in current environment
- Assessments and IEP goals
- Task analysis of key targets, teach pre-requisite skills first
- Age-appropriate norms

Let’s look at some examples of skills that may be appropriate for learners at particular ages.
### Lunch Related Skills

**Young students should learn**
- To walk through the lunch line independently
- What food to choose
- How to pay for their food
- Where to sit
- Dismissal expectations

**Middle school students should learn**
- Portion Control and how much food to take
- Money skills
- Nutritional facts
- Cooperation with peers

**Raise their hand if they need assistance**
- How to socialize with peers
- Eat only the food on their plate
- Basic table manners
Lunch Related Skills

Middle school students should learn
- Appropriate conversation with peers
- Planning and organizing; how much will fit on one tray?
- Problem solving
- Social interactions with adults

Lunch Related Skills

High school students should learn
- Time management
- Advanced social skills
- Cooperation with others
- Planning and organizing
- Boundaries with free time

Success at Lunch

Teachers and lunch monitors should
1. Establish clear rules and expectations
2. Use rewards to improve desired behavior
3. Introduce lunch skills in the classroom
4. Consider environmental constraints
**Success at Lunch**

- Teachers and lunch monitors should

  5. Share leadership roles and responsibility
  6. Make opportunities to teach or improve behaviors
  7. Provide fun activities to do during lunch
  8. Use students to help facilitate appropriate behavior

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**Success at Lunch**

1. **Establish clear rules and expectations**
   - Teach the student what to do and what not to do
   - Teach age-appropriate behaviors
   - Be consistent
   - Follow through
   - Teach—Enforce—Reinforce!

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**Success at Lunch**

2. **Use rewards to improve desired behaviors**
   - Reinforce entire tables of well-behaved students
   - Use a raffle system; tickets can be given for desired behavior and later exchanged for something desirable
   - Establish a simple Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down communication system for specific kids
Success at Lunch

3. Introduce lunch skills in the classroom
- Discuss and practice expected lunchroom skills
- Post reminders for lunchtime expectations
- Send home updates so parents can get involved and teach the same appropriate skills during meals at home too

4. Consider environmental constraints
- If students eat in their classroom, spend a few minutes having students help re-organize the room
- The meal area should be easy to move around through
- Reduce noise with posters, barriers, or other items that can absorb sound
- Consider playing music in the background

5. Share leadership roles and responsibilities
- Remain consistent about lunchroom procedures
- Teach and use hand signals to communicate between adults and students
- Use gentle reminders
- Give transition warnings
- Allow independence, but assist when needed
Success at Lunch

6. Make opportunities to teach or improve behavior
- Provide positive, friendly interactions
- Remind students of recently reviewed lesson
- Show students how to do a new skill
- Allow students to practice new skill
- Provide encouragement and reinforcing statements

Success at Lunch

7. Provide fun activities to do during lunch
- Initiate a game while students wait in line
- Play music in the background
- Allow student performances
- Encourage trivia games and appropriate joking
- Give trouble-prone students tasks to stay busy

Success at Lunch

8. Use students to facilitate appropriate behavior
- Start a buddy system between older and younger students
- Assign a student monitor from each class or table
- Allow well-behaved students to give out ‘coupons’ to other well-behaved students
- Provide incentive for older students to model and help with younger students
Classroom Strategies for Lunch Success

- Above all, lunchtime is a great time for learning to occur
- Development in adaptive skills, independence and socialization doesn’t come easily or naturally to all
- Students need to be taught how to perform these skills

Teaching lunch skills can start in the classroom and then be used in the cafeteria or wherever the expected behavior should occur
- Skills can be taught individually or to groups of students

Here is an instructional model that can be used to proactively teach lunch-related skills within a classroom/small group setting:

1. Discuss in the classroom/small group
2. Role Play with students
3. Practice in the cafeteria
4. Provide feedback
5. Incorporate generalization and maintenance
Classroom Strategies for Lunch Success

- Discuss skill in the classroom
  - The teacher should identify an area of need and come up with examples of appropriate classroom behavior
  - The teacher should present this as a rule in a lesson format to inform the students of the new skill
    - (e.g. presentation of social rule, social story)

- Examples of what the skill should look like and examples of what the skill shouldn’t look like should be shared

- A rationale for why the skill should occur can be given to increase acceptance

- Role Play
  - In class, use students to role play an appropriate lunchtime behavior and an inappropriate lunchtime behavior
  - Have the other students critique the skill and identify what went wrong, why, what should have been done instead, how did it make someone feel
Classroom Strategies for Lunch Success

- Role Play
  - Modify based on age and appropriateness for student expectations
  - Use examples relevant to students
  - Teach proactively; before it is a problem

- Practice in the cafeteria with guidance
  - After successful discussion and role play, take the skill to the cafeteria/lunch area
  - Remind students to use what they learned
  - May include scripts, visual cues, social stories or other to help prepare students
  - Set up an opportunity for the skill to occur

- The teacher should interrupt, as needed, for better facilitation
- Be encouraging
- Be positive
Classroom Strategies for Lunch Success

- Provide feedback to the student(s)
  - After completion of cafeteria practice, discuss with students
  - Provide feedback to the group and/or individual students
  - Have students participate in the feedback process
  - Self-management

Classroom Strategies for Lunch Success

- Generalization and maintenance
  - In order for lunchtime to be successful, newly acquired skills must occur regularly
  - For skills to be generalized to non-training environments, people, and contexts, continued practice must occur
Classroom Strategies for Lunch Success

- Generalization and maintenance
  - Skills need to be reinforced if they are to continue
  - When skills aren't reinforced, they stop occurring

- Maintenance schedules should start with continuous reinforcement provided each time the skill occurs

- As the skill strengthens and becomes part of the student's regular routine, reinforcement can be provided more intermittently

Success at Lunch

- Let's look at some examples of this instructional procedure as applied to several of the target areas described previously
  - Adaptive Skills
  - Routines/Independence Skills
  - Social Skills
Adaptive Skills at Lunch

- Appropriate use of utensils/napkin

Quentin is learning to use his napkin throughout his lunch to keep his face clean.

Adaptive Skills at Lunch

- Appropriate use of utensils/napkin
  - Discuss and identify goal
  - Present Quentin/class with a target goal – using a napkin while eating
  - Talk about why it is important that we use a napkin
  - Demonstrate the correct and incorrect ways to use a napkin

Adaptive Skills at Lunch

- Appropriate use of utensils/napkin
  - Have students
  - Role play the situation
  - Present visual cues for proper use of a napkin
  - In the classroom, have students practice wiping their face with a napkin following a small snack
  - Practice folding the napkin over to re-use on a clean side
Adaptive Skills at Lunch

- Appropriate use of utensils/napkin
  - Have students
  - Practice in the lunch room
  - Once students master this in a classroom activity, give them an opportunity to practice during a meal
  - Again, provide visuals/modeling/verbal cues as needed

Adaptive Skills at Lunch

- Appropriate use of utensils/napkin
  - Teachers should
  - Provide feedback
  - Recognize and acknowledge when students are following the expectations
  - Provide assistance or reminders if students need help with a specific step or expectation

Adaptive Skills at Lunch

- Appropriate use of utensils/napkin
  - Teachers should
  - Generalize and maintain skills
  - Practice during every meal and snack time, fade out the presence of prompting and teacher involvement
  - Maintain with reinforcement; fade from constant to intermittent reinforcement
  - Request practice at home with family members
Independent Routines at Lunch

- Lining up and obtaining lunch
  
  When dismissed from class, the Kindergarteners need to learn to go to either the hot or cold lunch line, get their lunch if they brought it from home, and stand in line appropriately.

- Discuss and identify goal
  
  Talk about what the expectation is

- Talk about ways to remember if student is eating hot or cold lunch on a particular day

- Review steps in the routine, post steps in the class via pictures or symbols

- Role Play
  
  Aside from the lunch hour, practice lining up

  Give students the opportunity to identify earlier in the day if they will be having hot or cold lunch

  Practice lining up and walking to cafeteria outside of lunch times
Independent Routines at Lunch

- Lining up and obtaining lunch
  - Role Play
    - Model expectations
    - Use older students to model how students should act while standing and waiting in line

- Practice
  - Provide opportunities for students to practice lining up

- Feedback
  - Provide individual and group feedback
  - Provide goals and tips for improvement

Independent Routines at Lunch

- Lining up and obtaining lunch

- Generalization and Maintenance
  - Begin a reward system and use daily until most of the class is successful 90% or more of the time
  - Provide intermittent reinforcement for following instructions and behaving appropriately in line
Independent Routines at Lunch

- Buying lunch using money

Kylee is a 7th grader having a difficult time with money skills during math. To assist her in a more real-life situation, her math teacher has suggested she work on money skills during lunch, where Kylee buys and pays for her lunch daily.

- Discuss and identify a goal
- Provide Kylee with specific goals she should do during lunch
- Identify how much money she has
- Identify price on item
- Mentally calculate price of desired items
- Determine if she has enough money, what to omit

- Role Play
- Provide worksheets with cafeteria items and costs
- Provide items with price tags, ask Kylee to mentally calculate sums of various items
Independent Routines at Lunch
- Buying lunch using money
- Practice
  - During math class, when the pressure of standing in line with students behind her is not present, practice math fluency
  - Ask parents to practice at home and in the community
- Provide feedback
  - After timing Kylee and identify her accuracy, provide her with feedback and tips for faster, easier calculation
  - Reinforce her efforts and increased accuracy and speed
- Generalization and Maintenance
  - Begin a reward system and use when Kylee is accurate and fluent in money skills during lunch and in class
  - Intermittently praise her for money skills
  - Ask parents to start an in-home reward system to assist with this skill
Social Skills at Lunch

Conversation Skills – joining in
Bethany often sits at the lunch table and eats her lunch quietly. She will occasionally attempt to join the conversation, but usually says something off-topic and not related to the current conversation.

Socialization at Lunch

Conversation Skills – joining in
Have Bethany/students
- Discuss and identify social rule
- Teach Bethany rule for joining conversations – listening to the topic and saying something related
- Identify why this is important
- Demonstrate examples of making relevant versus off-topic comments
- Have Bethany identify if the comments are relevant or off-topic

Socialization at Lunch

Conversation Skills – joining in
Have Bethany/students
- Role play the situation
- Have Bethany observe two or more people having a conversation
- Prompt Bethany to listen to the conversation, identify the topic, and think of something related that she can say
- Prompt Bethany to join the conversation with the related comment
Socialization at Lunch

**Conversation Skills – joining in**

- Have Bethany/students practice joining conversations (small groups/lunch table)
- Set up multiple opportunities for Bethany to listen to others having conversations
- Bethany listens, identifies something relevant to say and joins the conversation
- May use visual cues to remind her of the steps, then fade

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Socialization at Lunch

**Conversation Skills – joining in**

- Teachers should provide feedback
- Recognize and acknowledge when Bethany is making relevant comments to the conversation
- Identify when Bethany needs assistance and provide immediate intervention or feedback

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Socialization at Lunch

**Conversation Skills – joining in**

- Teachers should generalize and maintain skills
- Reward Bethany for appropriately joining conversations
- Provide many ongoing opportunities for Bethany to improve her joining skills and expand to other areas of need in conversation
Conclusions

Lunch can be a challenging time

The lunch environment contains many distractions

Students may become overwhelmed in this environment

Lunch should be a positive and productive experience for students, as it contributes greatly to the remainder of their day

Conclusions

Well planned lessons can be used to help both the students and adults during this difficult time

Teachers, administrators, and lunch monitors can work together to teach students in class or during lunch time the skills they need for success