

To whom this may concern:

My name is _____ and I am _____.

We are looking forward to a fabulous school year and thrilled my child is in your class. I wanted to introduce myself and take a moment to share a little about how we talk about food and bodies at our house. We approach these topics differently than many do, focusing on promoting body positivity and trust. We talk about food and weight in a neutral way. We don't talk about or label foods as "good" foods or "bad" foods. We allow _____ to decide how much _____ eats of the food we offer and work hard to avoid diet talk. At lunch time, we ask that _____ be able to eat _____ lunch items in any order, without comment, so as to debunk any food hierarchy and support intuitive eating.

Children are always gaining weight and growing. It is important we promote the idea that weight gain is a good thing and not something to be avoided. Children hear so many messages about nutrition and what they should and shouldn't eat and for more vulnerable children, some of these messages can be a part of developing an eating disorder.

Dieting is a risk factor in the development of an eating disorder. How we talk about food and bodies in school can have an impact on how our children view their bodies and how they approach food throughout their lifetime.

Eating disorders have the second highest mortality rate of any mental illness, with one person dying every 52-minutes.¹ **At some hospitals, medical admissions for eating disorders for adolescents have doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic.**² In addition to that frightening statistic, this is also the reality our children live in:

- 81% of ten year olds are afraid of being fat³
- 35% of 5 year old girls are already on a diet.⁴
- Awareness of dieting as strategies for weight loss emerges as young as 3-years-old, and significantly increases from 3- to 5-years-old. ⁵

I would like to make you aware of several resources that may be helpful in bringing information about body inclusivity to our school.

The National Alliance for Eating Disorders (The Alliance) is the leading national eating disorder nonprofit organization providing education, referrals and support for all eating disorders. Sunny Side Up Nutrition is a free resource and podcast for parents and educators about developmentally appropriate nutrition education, family feeding and raising children to be competent eaters.

The Alliance and Sunny Side Up Nutrition would be wonderful allies in building a body positive culture and curriculum for our school that would support students' physical and mental growth. Both organizations are also available to present training to your staff and faculty, as well as referral and support services.

I look forward to the school year and I'd love the opportunity to speak to you more about this. Thank you!

Warmly,

1 Deloitte Access Economics. The Social and Economic Cost of Eating Disorders in the United States of America: A Report for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders and the Academy for Eating Disorders. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/report-economic-costs-of-eating-disorders/>.

2 Otto AK, Jary JM, Sturza J, et al. Medical Admissions Among Adolescents With Eating Disorders During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Pediatrics*. 2021;148(4):e2021052201. doi:10.1542/peds.2021-052201

3 Collins, M.E. Body figure perceptions and preferences among pre-adolescent children. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 1991 March; 10(2):199-208.

4 Damiano SR, et al. Dietary restraint of 5-year-old girls: Associations with internalization of the thin ideal and maternal, media, and peer influences: 5-YEAR-OLD GIRLS' DIETARY RESTRAINT. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2015;48(8):1166-1169. doi:10.1002/eat.22432

5 Rodgers RF, et al. "Stop eating lollies and do lots of sports": a prospective qualitative study of the development of children's awareness of dietary restraint and exercise to lose weight. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act*. 2015;12(1):155. doi:10.1186/s12966-015-0318-x

Resources



National Alliance for Eating Disorders

www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com

www.findEDHelp.com



www.sunnysideupnutrition.com

www.sunnysideupnutrition.com/podcast