

## Resources



National Alliance for Eating Disorders

[www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com](http://www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com)

[www.findEDHelp.com](http://www.findEDHelp.com)



Sunny Side Up Nutrition

[www.sunnysideupnutrition.com](http://www.sunnysideupnutrition.com)

[www.sunnysideupnutrition.com/podcast](http://www.sunnysideupnutrition.com/podcast)

### BOOKS:

- Diet Free Schools & Activities, Handout for Educators and Coaches, <https://sunnysideupnutrition.com/resources/>
- Elyn Satter Institute, <https://www.elynsatterinstitute.org/>
- Love Me, Feed Me, Katja Rowell
- Born to Eat, Leslie Schilling & Wendy Jo Peterson
- Helping Your Child With Extreme Picky Eating, Katja Rowell
- Intuitive Eating, Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch
- Intuitive Eating Workbook for Teens, Elyse Resch
- Health at Every Size, Lindo Bacon
- Body Respect, Lindo Bacon & Lucy Aphramor
- Healthy Bodies; Teaching Kids What They Need to Know, (Middle School Curriculum), Kathy Kater
- Full Bloom Project, <https://www.fullbloomproject.com/>
- Your Child's Weight, Helping Without Harming, Elyn Satter
- Anti-Diet, Christy Harrison
- Burnt Toast Newsletter, Virginia Sole-Smith, <https://viriniasolesmith.substack.com/>

# Introductory Letter

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.<sup>1</sup> **At some hospitals, medical admissions for eating disorders for adolescents have doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic.**<sup>2</sup> In addition to that frightening statistic, this is also the reality our children live in:

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

Warmly,

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# Food Police Letter

To whom this may concern:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Recently, it came to my attention that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Although well meaning, it is concerning to me that teachers are telling children how to eat. Most children are born with the ability to self regulate their intake. When adults interfere or make diet based comments, we begin to interfere with their abilities to trust and listen to their bodies.

In our home, we do not moralize foods or label them as “good” or “bad.” We allow individuals to listen to their bodies and decide what order they will eat their food and how much they eat. If we, as adults, micromanage children’s food intake, we send messages that their bodies can’t be trusted.

How we feed our children is foundational. Keeping diet messages out of feeding children is protective against eating disorders, as dieting is a major risk factor of eating disorders. 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.

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# Do Not Weigh Letter



To whom this may concern:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Please let this letter serve as my request that my child be exempt from being weighed at school. If additional steps need to be taken, please let me know the process for this exemption.

I am deeply concerned that our school is weighing students on campus. Weighing children in schools has not been shown to be “effective” in improving children’s weight (the presumed reason to conduct weigh-ins), and more importantly have the serious potential to cause harm.

A single weight and height measurement of a child does not provide information on how a child is growing over time. Heights and weights of children are best used in the context of that child’s growth history and, thus, best taken at the pediatrician’s office. Research shows that conducting public weigh-ins or having “BMI Report Cards” are not only ineffective in their presumed goal of changing children’s weight status, but they also cause harm by increasing weight talk among peers, increased diet talk among families, and increased body dissatisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

Weight and height measurements are sensitive health information and should be treated as such. No measurements should be taken by a school unless it is in compliance with the law. If measurement by the school is mandated by law, it is imperative that the measurements be obtained in a private setting, with no peers present. Measurements should be recorded without comment of the recorder and the children should be weighed blindly.

When measurements are collected at school, children compare their “numbers” to others. Also, hearing their measurements may be confused or cause them to be scared by what they mean. The interpretation of growth and weight gain are abstract concepts and confusing. It’s not appropriate to give this information to children, out of context and where comparison can occur.

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<sup>1</sup> Madsen KA, Thompson HR, Linchey J, et al. Effect of School-Based Body Mass Index Reporting in California Public Schools: A Randomized Clinical Trial. JAMA Pediatr. 2021;175(3):251–259.

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

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Warmly,

# Harmful Assignment Letter

To whom this may concern:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Recently, \_\_\_\_\_.

As a parent, I have serious concerns about this assignment because of the unintentional harm that can be caused when school lessons and assignments focus on weight or moralize food as good or bad. This assignment is not only developmentally inappropriate, but it also contains potentially harmful content. While well intended, messages like these can burden children with a lifetime of body image struggles and confusion about food, as well as lead to the development of an eating disorder.

Over the last 20 years, how and what we teach children about food has become more weight focused and developmentally inappropriate. Instead of teaching children where foods come from, cultural food differences, that all food serves a purpose, and to care for and respect their bodies, we teach fear and mistrust. Nutrition is not black and white and when we teach children nutrition in a fear based, absolute way, we create more fear and confusion. Children are supposed to be gaining weight, it is a sign of health and development. When school nutrition lessons convey the message, whether blatant or implied, that weight gain is bad, we teach our children that their growing bodies are bad.

### **For Preschool and Grade School Students**

As you know, young children are concrete thinkers. Nutrition and health are abstract concepts. When we tell children certain foods are good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, "red light" or "green light", we are trying to teach them an abstract concept in a concrete way. Young children may hear this lesson and become fearful of the foods that the educator deemed as "unhealthy." Sensitive children may stop eating adequately because of this fear around food. Some children may feel shame that the food they are served at home isn't on the "good" list (please take food access into consideration). Children respect you as their teacher and often see you as the expert. Imposing your personal beliefs about food may influence your students' thoughts about food. Please remember, your words have a significant impact.

## For Middle School and High School Students

As you well know, middle school and high school are pivotal years in puberty, growth and development. They are also impressionable years that make children more susceptible to inappropriate and dangerous messages about food and body. Instead of teaching our middle and high schoolers to distrust their bodies and fear food, we need to be teaching them that their growing bodies are wise and taking good care of them, nourishing them fully, is important for their whole life.

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Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. I am asking that you please reconsider this assignment, as it may be harmful and saddle our children with a lifetime of food and body struggles. I look forward to hearing from and working with you to help prevent eating disorders and spread body inclusivity at \_\_\_\_\_.

Warmly,

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# Opt-Out Assignment Letter

To whom this may concern:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_.

I am writing to ask you to exempt my child from \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_ has a history of an eating disorder/disordered eating. At this time, it would not be conducive to \_\_\_\_\_ recovery to complete these assignments. I am very aware that \_\_\_\_\_ will need to complete an assignment, and we are asking for the opportunity for an alternative assignment or class work that does not jeopardize their recovery.

As you consider this topic for the other students, we hope you will consider the messages these assignments are sending. While school assignments do not cause eating disorders, they can be a trigger for vulnerable students. Messages involving “good” and “bad” foods can create an environment where children may become fearful of food, and feel shame and confusion about the food their families feed them. It is also important to remember that nutrition and health needs can be very individual. We suggest that school lessons not include messages about weight loss and weight maintenance being positive or weight gain being negative. Children are supposed to be gaining weight - it is a sign of health and development. When school nutrition lessons convey the message, whether blatant or implied, that weight gain is bad, we teach our children that their growing bodies are bad.

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