CHILD-CENTERED CONVERSATIONS
12 tips for talking with kids at meals

It’s possible – even easy – to have pleasant mealtimes with preschool children. Many factors are important in creating positive mealtime situations; kids-size tables, chairs, dishes, and utensils; a calm, cozy atmosphere (quiet music, maybe a candle or two); appealing foods served family-style, and engaging conversations. For successful talks at the table, try the Team Nutrition Conversation Starter cards – and these tips from the experienced and effective teachers at Head Start Centers in Billings, Montana. ENJOY!!

 Know – and use – each child’s name.
 Keep discussions positive and focused on their interests.
 Show real interest in what each child has to say.
 Listen carefully to what the children are talking about – and go from there.
 Start with the names of the foods – making sure that every child knows the name of the items.
 Discuss the foods – using words for colors, temperatures, smells, textures, and flavors.
 Help children converse with each other – like asking each other to pass a serving dish of food.
 Discuss the meal helper jobs – and what they are doing to be helpful today.
 Discuss hunger levels: You played really hard outside today. Is your tummy hungry now?
 Focus on today: What book did we read today? What were you playing with before lunch?
 Allow children to tell stories – a real story, a make-believe story, or a story that they heard from someone else.
 Use predictions about what will happen in the near future: What do you think our story will be about today?
 Use the theme/concepts of the day (like a number or letter or holiday that you are discussing at circle time).

Prepared by Dayle Hayes, MS, RD
EatWellatSchool@gmail.com