

CAFETERIA COACHING

Coaching kids to better nutrition one bite at a time.



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach



This curriculum was created using funds from a grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, Ames.

LEOPOLD CENTER Revised October 2014

Cafeteria Coaching

Coaching Kids to Better Nutrition One Bite at a Time.

I. Mission

Cafeteria Coaching is a cafeteria-based program that uses middle school and high school students along with school nutrition staff and cafeteria staff to encourage kids to try new foods and eat nutritious school meals. Through the use of cafeteria coaches during the school lunch periods, we hope to do the following:

- To increase consumption of whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- To try recipes/foods that can be featured on the menu in the future.
- To use foods that meet school requirements for nutrition, presentation and cost.
- To try some local foods.

II. What is a cafeteria coach?

A cafeteria coach is a middle or high school student who motivates elementary kids to try new menu items and eat nutritious meals at school. The lunchroom is a hectic environment and kids often need reminders to focus on their food, help with cutting up food and opening milk cartons, and general encouragement to try new foods. In addition, they may not even know the names of some of the fruits, vegetables and menu items being offered.

NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative in partnership with your school district has dedicated itself to decreasing processed foods and offering a wider variety of whole grains, fruits, vegetables and meals from scratch. Some of the new menu items are unfamiliar to kids, and they may resist them preferring the “old” familiar cheese pizza and french fries. Although they may resist these foods now, they can learn to like them.

Your job as a cafeteria coach is to encourage kids to try news foods, even if it is just one bite. Kids look up to older students to make food choices, and teens who serve as cafeteria coaches have the capability to change the way children eat at school.

III. Why We Need Cafeteria coaches

- **Healthy kids learn better!**
- Most kids have to be introduced to a new food over 10 times before they will try it.
- Research indicates that kids may actually like fruits and vegetables! In fact, they may prefer them over candy but don’t always choose them.
- Kids look up to older students, parents and guardians to develop eating habits.
- Less than 25% of children eat the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables every day.
- American children currently obtain nearly 50% of their calories from added fats and sugars.

IV. Qualities of a Cafeteria Coach

- Likes most items served at school lunch
- Outgoing; Likes to talk to kids
- Encourage kids to try new foods offered in school cafeteria without being forceful.
- Understand the Great Taster Rules to reinforce other nutrition education in the school
- Build relationships and make eating fun for kids.
- Willing to volunteer at least one shift per month so kids can get familiar with you!

V. Logistics

What to Expect

School cafeterias are hectic and loud, but the kids are really fun! There may be several lunch periods per day, and each is approximately 25-30 minutes. We recommend that you arrive 15- 20 minutes prior to your lunch period. This manual will focus on two ways to interact with students.

Sometimes younger students are scared of older students (strangers). Be welcoming and smile!

Sit and Eat. This type of coaching works well when a coach interacts with the same grade or same group of students. When students enter the lunchroom, you can offer to help them select foods to put on their tray. Coaches also take a tray and sit down with the younger students. Introduce yourself. Ask them if you may join them for lunch. Some kids may need help in cutting up their food and opening milk cartons, while others will need some encouragement to try foods on their plates! Others may not know what the fruit or vegetable is on their tray. Explain it! Remember to encourage kids to try new foods, but do not force them! See the *Conversation Starters* for ideas to jump start the interaction.

Taste-test Server.

A taste test (or “try-it”) is a small sample of food offered in the cafeteria at lunchtime, introducing its flavor, texture and smell. The item might be a dollop of fresh salsa with a handful of corn chips, a new entrée recipe, a small 2-oz. serving of roasted root vegetables, or a mini whole wheat carrot-maple muffin. After the sample has been offered, children (and adults) vote on whether they tried it, liked it, and would be willing to try it again. Try-it stations may be set up at a table in the cafeteria or the coach may take a tray around to the students sitting at the tables.

~ Conversation Starters ~

Use the questions below to help you get to know each other.

What is your favorite vegetable?

What is your favorite sport?

What teams do you cheer for?

What is your favorite subject in school?

What are you learning about today?

What is your favorite color?

What do you like to do to be active?

Tell me about your family.

Tell me about your classmates.

What is your favorite school meal?

What food do you wish we could have for lunch?

If you could visit anyplace in the world, where would you go?

What are you doing this weekend?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Tips for Try-its

- Use small portions to encourage student to “try a bite.”
- Save a few uncut vegetables for demonstration.
- Uncover some interesting facts about the foods, or bring books relating to the foods to read aloud.
- Have a way for students to vote. Use a poster with stickers, a jar with beans – anyway to tally the vote.
- Vote on different ways the food was prepared vs. whether the student liked or disliked. For example, do you like the squash with cinnamon or chili powder? Do you like broccoli raw or steamed? Take the focus off the dislike and make them choose what they liked better.
- Explain it! Remember to encourage kids to try new foods, but do not force them!



Remember: You are *not* responsible for disciplining kids or dismissing them from the lunch period. There will be additional staff responsible for these tasks.

What to Wear

We want kids to recognize you. Talk with your team about wearing aprons, nametags, t-shirts or sports jerseys to identify yourselves as coaches.



V. Cafeteria Coaching Strategies

Kids can be reluctant to change and it can be hard to encourage them to try something new. Below are some suggestions on how best to reach children. We encourage you to use your own strategies in addition to ours.

Key Strategies and Talking Points

Learn how kids eat

(Research by Ellyn Satter, Approach to Feeding and the Division of Responsibility in Feeding, www.ellynsatter.com)

- Kids eat better when they are not pressured.
- Kids eat unpredictably, waste food and are leery of trying new foods.
- Kids naturally stop eating and drinking when they are full.
- They like choices.
- They want to feel safe with food on their tray, not scared what they will be forced to eat it, pressured to try a bite, etc.
- They need to have plenty of time to eat, at least 15-20 minutes seat time.
- They eat with their eyes first and are not interested in food that is unappealing to them.
- They need limits and guidance on how to respectfully decline food.
- They like to eat and socialize with friends.

Remember the *Division of Responsibility in Feeding*

- Adults decide **what, when** and **where** of feeding in school.
- Children decide **whether they will choose to eat the foods offered** and **how much to eat**.

Your Role as a Cafeteria Coach

- Help student feel safe, welcomed and valued. Model and teach respectful manners.
- Let them decide how much to eat and how to make choices respectfully.
- Teach/model social skills for meals: inside voices, eating etiquette, use of utensils, and gauging time to eat before dismissal.

Phrases that HINDER	Phrases that HELP
Finish your milk.	Are you still thirsty?
	Are you finished with your milk?
You didn't eat enough of your lunch.	Did you get enough to eat today?
	Are you finished with your lunch?
Hurry, you only have 5 more minutes to finish your lunch!	You have five more minutes to enjoy your lunch.
	If you are still hungry, fill up your tummies in the next five minutes.

Strategies to Avoid:

- **Pressuring, bribing, or forcing kids to eat fruits, vegetables and new items.**
Doing this actually makes them less likely to try them.
- **Telling kids to eat foods because they are “healthy.”**
Sometimes, labeling something as “healthy” often makes it taste worse to kids.
- **Rewarding kids for eating fruits and vegetables.**
Offering sweets as rewards for eating vegetables may make them even less likely to eat them.

Additional Program Helps

Use cool names: Research has shown that kids may eat nearly twice as many fruits and vegetables if they have cool names. Suggestions include: Monkey bars bananas, C-monster oranges, goofy grapes, rockin' raspberries, x-ray vision carrots or maybe even barrack-oli. Feel free to make up your own!

Advertise, advertise, advertise – via the school newsletter, school website, e-mail, flyers in backpacks, and posters around school.

Sample School Announcement

Today, the cafeteria coaches will be joining us for lunch. They will be sampling _____ . Get your taste-buds ready to try this new food!

Research and share nutritional information about the food, and have the recipes ready to send to parents. Use this opportunity to educate parents and students about the nutritional benefits of school lunch.

After the tasting, **tally the results, review, and report the findings** to parents and students. Work with food service staff to see if the winning item(s) can be incorporated into school meals!

VI. Conclusions

Nutrition is key to children's concentration in school, behavior and overall health. You as a cafeteria coach have the capability to change the way kids eat. *Who says that fruits, vegetables and whole grains can't be exciting?*

References:

Adapted from *Food Coach Manual*, Hopkins School District (Minnesota) created by Megan Thomas, University of Minnesota, Public Health Nutrition Student, online at www.hopkinsschools.org.



Comfortable Cafeterias webinar, Dayle Hayes, MS, RD, Team Nutrition Iowa, October 2, 2013.

A Guide to Taste Testing Local Food in Schools, Vermont Farm to School, March 2010.

NE Iowa Farm to School Cross-Age Teaching curriculum, NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative, 2013.

Cafeteria Coaches Planning Guide

Use this guide to plan the events with school food service and other students at your school.

List your Cafeteria Coaching Team (youth and adults):

What foods do you want to taste?

Food	Date	Sit & Eat or Try-It?	Grades/Lunch Time
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Talking points for each food:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How will you promote the tasting?

Other Notes or Special Activities:

Other considerations:

- How will the students vote?
- What will the cafeteria coach team wear?
- Do you need to arrange for additional training for more coaches?

NE Iowa Farm to School Growing Great Tasters

Strategies for Food Tasting

Food tasting is deeply rooted into the activities of this resource. The chance to taste a food many times helps children to grow into adventurous eaters. Trying new foods may lead to better health and nutrition. Use the tips below to increase the number of great tasters at your school.

Involve the children and all their senses in exploring the fruit or vegetable first. Children are more likely to try a food they have explored.

Offer new foods first to children willing to try new things. Watching a peer eat a food can help the most reluctant eater bud into a food taster.

Offer Bites, Not Bushels. Offer small tastes of a food at first. A child can be overwhelmed by a large portion and may even refuse to try a food, fearing it must be finished. Be prepared to offer more if a child desires to taste again.

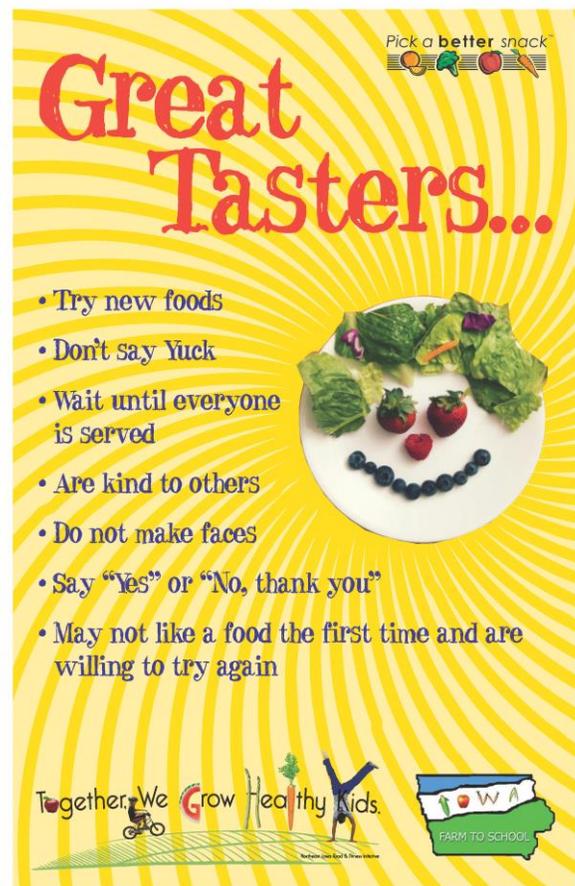
Teach the children the guidelines for polite food tasting. Children are more likely to try a taste of a new food if they don't have to swallow something they dislike. These are the four Great Taster rules we will reinforce in Farm to School lessons.

Great Tasters:

1. **Try new foods.** (Action: Pretend to eat)
2. **Don't say Yuck or make faces.** They vote thumbs up or down (Action: Alternate thumbs up and down)
3. **Wait until everyone is served.** (Action: tap on your imaginary wristwatch)
4. **Are willing to try the food again in the future.** Sometimes a food that does not taste good today will taste good on another day. (Action: pretend you are counting by wiggling your fingers fast)

Other Great Taster Rules that can be noted when needed:

- When children taste foods they do not want to swallow: Teach them to remove the food politely from their mouth with a napkin. Show them how to discard the napkin quietly in a wastebasket.
- Remind your child or children that it is important to be kind to other people when tasting food. Do not make faces and say unpleasant things about the food. Acting that way can hurt the feelings of the person who prepared the food or of someone else who likes the food.
- Great food tasters say, "Yes, thank you" or "No, thank you" when offered seconds.
- They are happy when other people enjoy the food.



NE Iowa Farm to School

Why Eat Locally Grown Food?



Because What We Eat Matters.

How our food is grown, processed, and packaged really does matter. Our food choices influence our health, the quality of our environment, jobs in our community, and the culture and diversity of our society.

Buying locally grown food is good for YOU. (ACTION: Run in place)

Food tastes better and is more nutritious when it's fresh. It has not traveled thousands of miles to reach your plate. Fresher foods tend to have high nutrient qualities, which helps prevent disease—keeping you healthy. When you eat local food, you will most likely be eating whole fruits and vegetables and foods without preservatives and additives of processed foods. Eating a balanced diet is one of the most important medicines: it can prevent, treat, and cure disease.

Buying locally grown food is good for your FAMILY. (ACTION: Wrap arms and give yourself a hug)

Food brings people together. Meals are a time when busy families can sit down together. Many families in northeast Iowa grow or raise food, and together they participate in a growing cycle. When we raise or grow our own food we deepen our appreciation for it and will seek out foods grown in a similar manner.

Buying locally grown food is good for our COMMUNITY. (ACTION: Hold hands with neighbor or give high fives)

Keeping our local farmers and producers in business supports our local economy. Dollars spent close to home tend to stay close to home. Our local producers understand our community and work to provide nutritious affordable food for all our citizens. The more we feel connected to the people who produce what we eat, the better we preserve our regional food heritage. Rural and urban-- we're all connected.

Buying locally grown food is good for FARMERS. (ACTION: Pretend to dig with shovel or pitch hay.)

Northeast Iowa is a rural area and farming is important to the economy. Many area farmers have deep roots in the region and are farming on century-old farms. They are vested in our communities and are concerned for the health of our people, land, and economies.

When farmers sell directly to their neighbors and local businesses, fewer middlemen cut into their profits. Farmers can afford to stay on their land producing an abundance and variety of food while being good stewards of the land. Whether it's the farmer who brings local apples to the school or the baker who makes local bread, knowing part of the story about your food is such a powerful part of enjoying a meal.

Buying locally grown food is good for the ENVIRONMENT. (ACTION: Stand tall like tree (tree pose))

Most of the food we eat travels an average of 1,500 miles from the farm to our table. By reducing the travel distance our food takes, we save energy and reduce carbon dioxide emissions that likely contribute to global warming. By buying whole local foods, we also reduce packaging. Sustainable farming practices protect the quality of our water and soil, while preserving green space for healthy native habitats.



Iowa 4-H Program Priorities Self-Assessment

Food and Fitness Initiative

Cafeteria Coaches

Instructions: Self-assessment administrators are asked to please assist youth in grades 4 – 6 in completing the top general information section of the self-assessment. For all youth in grades 4 – 12, read aloud each AFTER question, followed by the corresponding BEFORE question, one at a time, and wait for the youth to circle the response that best describes their experiences.

School: _____

Date: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Male:** ____ **Female:** ____

	AFTER <i>After participating in this 4-H program, how much do your actions show you can...</i>					BEFORE <i>Before participating in this 4-H program, how much did your actions show you could...</i>				
	Not at all	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	A great deal	Not at all	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	A great deal
Circle the number that best represents your level of agreement.										
Leadership										
1. Work together in a team	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Listen and talk to others before making decisions	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Communication										
4. Feel confident when speaking in front of others	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Use good listening skills when others are talking	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ask questions	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Create products to share ideas/information <i>(for example: a poster, speech, display, demonstration, web page, video)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Healthy Living										
8. Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. Safely and carefully handle and prepare foods to eat	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. Help your family make healthy food choices or meals	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

9. What was the most beneficial thing about participating as a Cafeteria Coach?

10. What things did you learn?

11. How do you feel your participation in the program benefited your group and your school?

12. Why did you choose to become involved?

13. How did your behavior change as a result of being involved as a Cafeteria Coach? (Examples: how I communicate or act in relationships with others, am more responsible, am more organized, manage time, etc.?)

14. Did you feel your attitude or perspective on things changed as a result of your participation in the program? If so, how? (Examples: your tolerance toward people different from yourself or toward younger youth; looking at things in a more positive way; attitude toward your school or community, etc.)

15. How did your participation in the program influence you, overall, with regard to a future career or otherwise?

16. If someone were to ask, "Why should I become involved as a Cafeteria Coach in the Food & Fitness Initiative?" what would you tell him/her?

17. Are there other comments you would like to add?

<i>Fruit</i>	<i>Nutrients</i>	<i>Original Message</i>	<i>Revised Message</i>
Apples	Fiber	Good source of fiber, which will help with your digestive system AND keep the doctor away!	Apples are high in fiber which helps fill you up and moves things through your body to make you feel good.
Bananas	Vitamin B6 Potassium Fiber Vitamin C	Good source of potassium which helps maintain healthy blood pressure and keeps your energy up throughout the day!	Bananas are a superfood for your heart; and because they contain fiber, they keep you full and energized for playing on the playground!
Strawberries	Vitamin C Folate	Full of antioxidants which fight against cancer and other diseases.	Not only does strawberries' red color make them look scrumptious, it's good for you too! Eat these berries often to keep you healthy for tomorrow's big game.
Blueberries	Vitamin C	Full of antioxidants which fight against cancer and other diseases.	Did you know that there is actually something in blueberries that helps to reverse short-term memory loss? I think a few of these will help you on that test you have coming up.
Blackberries	Vitamin C Fiber Manganese Vitamin K	Full of antioxidants which fight against cancer and other diseases.	Blackberries are a Superfood for your heart, and their dark color ensures you are getting loads of good stuff to pump up your body. Can you say Superman (or Superwoman)?
Grapes	Vitamin C Manganese Vitamin K	Contain phytochemicals (FIGHT-oh-CHEM-icals) that can speed up healing and prevent cancer.	The skins of these yummy fruits contain plenty of good nutrients that help you fight infection and heal those scrapes and cuts. It's like nature's medicine!
Kiwi	Vitamin E Potassium Fiber Vitamin C	Excellent source of vitamin C and E which help fight infections. Don't forget: the skin of the kiwi is full of antioxidants!	Kiwis have as much potassium as bananas. Potassium is very important in helping your muscles move. So eat a kiwi to make you a super athlete like [name].
Oranges	Fiber Vitamin C	Rich in vitamin C which helps heal cuts and wounds quickly.	Everyone knows that oranges are loaded with vitamin C (in fact, one medium orange contains an entire day's worth of it), but did you know that vitamin C is great for your gums and mouth. That'll come in handy when you are singing your heart out in music class!

<i>Fruit</i>	<i>Nutrients</i>	<i>Original Message</i>	<i>Revised Message</i>
Pears	Fiber Vitamin C	Good source of fiber to help with healthy digestion. Don't forget: most of the fiber is found in the skin of the pear!	Don't forget to eat the peel, it's sweet, juicy and full of fiber to keep your tummy full! And remember...a full tummy will keep you focused for that next spelling test. Now how do you spell fiber again?
Pineapple	Vitamin C	Good source of vitamin C to help keep teeth and gums healthy! Smile big!	Good source of vitamin C to help keep teeth and gums healthy! Smile big for your [school or team] pictures! Pineapple is also great for your joints to keep you running all day long - [athlete's name] has got nothing on you.
Tomato	Vitamin A Potassium Vitamin C	Yes, a tomato is actually a fruit! Tomatoes contain lycopene which is a powerful antioxidant.	Yes, a tomato is actually a fruit! The stuff that gives tomatoes their bright red color is really good for you too! Eat them often to keep your body strong against infection and disease. You'll never have to do make-up assignments again (accept for snow days)!
Avocado	Vitamin A Potassium Vitamin E Folate		These nutrition boosters help your body keep all the good things from other fruits and vegetables. If fruits and vegetables give your power, eating them with avocados gives you turbo power!
Peaches	Vitamin C		With loads of Vitamin C and brain-boosting components to help you ace that next math test, you can't go wrong with this yummy fruit.
Melon	Vitamin C Vitamin A		This filling fruit is a great refresher after a long day playing outside. Its mother nature's sports drink!

<i>Vegetable</i>	<i>Nutrients</i>	<i>Original Message</i>	<i>Revised Message</i>
Beets	Folate	Beets are a good source of folate which is good for a healthy heart!	The good stuff in this vegetable keep your ticker running smoothly. Have to keep that blood pumping if want to be able to run like [athlete name.]
Broccoli	Vitamin C Calcium Fiber Potassium	Excellent source of vitamin C. Broccoli has even more vitamin C than an orange! Broccoli also helps fight cancer and has calcium for healthy bones.	Can you believe that broccoli has more vitamin C than an orange? There is also a ton of calcium in there to help you grow strong bones - maybe you'll even get to be as tall as Shaq.
Carrots	Vitamin A Vitamin C	Rich in vitamin A to help with x-ray vision at night!	Rich in vitamin A to help with x-ray vision at night and to see through your teacher's paper. That might come in handy during a test!
Cauliflower	Vitamin C Folate	Good source of fiber, folate and vitamin C. Folate helps the body form healthy red blood cells.	Compounds in cauliflower work together to strengthen the immune system. You were a tough cookie before but imagine how tough you'll be with cauliflower on your team!
Celery	Vitamin A Vitamin C	Good source of fiber to help us digest the food we eat!	Eat celery with some peanut butter for a delicious snack that will fill you up. No tummy grumbles means you'll be able to listen to the teacher better...you'll get an A on that next test for sure.
Corn	Vitamin C Folate Fiber	High in antioxidants, important for a healthy heart and lowering cancer risk.	Not only is corn delicious and yummy, but the fiber in there is good for your tummy.
Cucumber	Vitamin C		Be cool as a cucumber with this yummy vegetable! Our Cucumbers are great for your skin, smile pretty for those pictures.

<i>Vegetable</i>	<i>Nutrients</i>	<i>Original Message</i>	<i>Revised Message</i>
Green Beans	Fiber Vitamin C	Rich in vitamin K which is important for strong bones.	Did you know that green beans have a ton of vitamins C and K? Remember the last time you fell and got a cut? Vitamin K helped the cut stop bleeding and vitamin C healed it right up. With protection like this, green beans are a kid's best friend.
Jicama	Fiber Vitamin C		This Mexican potato will keep you hopping all day long with its loads of fiber. Do you know how to say fiber in Spanish? Fiber, ole!
Peas	Vitamin C Vitamin A Fiber Folate	Contain vitamin C to help keep your immune system strong and give you energy.	These yummy peas have folate which helps make blood cells. These cells take oxygen to the rest of your body, including your brain. So eat peas to help you out on your next test.
Red Pepper	Vitamin C Vitamin A	Rich in vitamin C which helps heal cuts and fight infections.	The vitamin A in red peppers helps you to see colors like [school color] and [other school color]....go [school mascot]!
Spinach	Vitamin C Vitamin A Fiber Folate Iron Magnesium	Rich in iron to keep your muscles strong. Remember Popeye???	With so many nutrients, this is certainly one of nature's super foods. Gobble down your spinach to help your memory...after all, you need to remember those multiplication tables (or whatever else they just told you they are working on) you just learned. (You can also refer to spinach as brain food, because it is!)
Sweet Potato	Vitamin C Vitamin A Fiber Potassium Calcium	This is a power-packed food that will give you energy! You will get lots of fiber, vitamin A and C and potassium.	Did you know that the orange color in sweet potatoes is really good for your brain? An apple a day will keep the doctor away but a sweet potato a day just might help you get straight A's.
Zucchini	Vitamin C		The vitamin C in this vegetable is great for your teeth, tongue and gums. Load up on zucchini and impress your dentist with your fabulous smile next visit.