



FOOD AND NUTRITION

We place a great deal of emphasis on all aspects of food preparation and consumption at ECMS. At school, children prepare breakfast, cook, prepare snack, set the table for lunch and clean up afterwards. Children want and need to be included in the planning, the preparation, and the cleaning up of meals.

- **Breakfast** is provided by New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) Food Services, free of charge. All children have the opportunity to eat breakfast at school each day. Children may bring their own breakfast from home if it meets the criteria set forth below.
- **Lunch** is also provided by NHPS Food Services, free of charge. Children may also bring their own lunch from home, provided it meets the criteria set forth below.

Bringing Food from Home

Please help us make all meals interesting, satisfying, and above all, healthy by adhering to the following guidelines:

- **No Nuts** - ECMS is a nut free facility. We respectfully request that you do not send any foods containing peanuts or other nuts in your child's food. This includes all foods prepared with peanut oil as well as peanut butter.
- **FOR PRIMARY CLASSROOMS ONLY:** No raw carrots, raw peas, whole grapes, popcorn, hard pretzels, peanut butter, hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.
- **Processed Foods** - We strive to prepare only non-processed foods. Please do not send prepackaged foods or microwave meals, such as *Lunchables* or *Chef Boyardee* pastas since they often have additives and extra salt. Please do not bring or send fast food/carry-out meals for your child. Sandwiches, cheese and crackers, and rolled sandwich meat (even cold pizza) are healthy alternatives. Fresh vegetables and a hummus dip are great additions. We also recommend fresh fruit and vegetables.
- **Desserts** – Please do not send donuts, cookies, candy, brownies, cakes, or other junk food items. These items are frequently a source of conflict among children.
- **Beverages** - Milk and water will be provided. **Please do not send other drinks.**
- **Portion Sizes** – Please send appropriate portions for your child's appetite to minimize food waste, while ensuring your child's needs are met.

- **Cold Packs and Thermoses** - Please include either a cold pack or thermos for items that must be kept cold.
- **Food Preparation in the Classroom** - Please pack food that does not require refrigeration or microwaving as this can cause a distraction while preparing for meal time. Microwaves and refrigerators are for classroom work only.

Tips for the Home Environment

Here are some suggestions for ways to bring the food culture at ECMS into your home:

- Involve your child in preparing their own lunch. Your child can slice cheese, put crackers into a container, or choose and wash vegetables and fruit.
- Prepare the kitchen so your child can participate. Your child will want to pour their own milk or water, help with peeling vegetables, and set and clear the table. You can make the process safe and fun by providing the proper equipment: child-sized glass pitchers, vegetable peelers, crinkle cutters, scrub brushes, mops, brooms and dustpans.
- Establish a daily routine. As much as possible, have breakfast, snack, and dinner the same time each day. This will allow your child to anticipate and participate securely in the rhythm of the household. Each afternoon, let your child get ready for the next day by emptying and cleaning the lunchbox. Upon returning from school, have a small pitcher of milk or water available on a low shelf in the refrigerator so that your child may prepare their own snack.

Celebration Food

Your child's Guide will contact you a week or two before your child's birthday in order to make plans for a small, in-school celebration. If you have other ideas for classroom celebrations, please share them with your child's guide. Preparations with your child's guide will include a decision about any food that will be served as well as other ways to contribute.

Please respect all allergies when providing food for celebration. In some cases, they are a matter of life and death. Also, please avoid sweet snacks or junk food (cookies, cupcakes, etc.) for birthdays or other holiday celebrations. Whole grain banana bread, fruit salad, oranges, or fresh berries and whipped cream are some examples of healthy celebration food.